

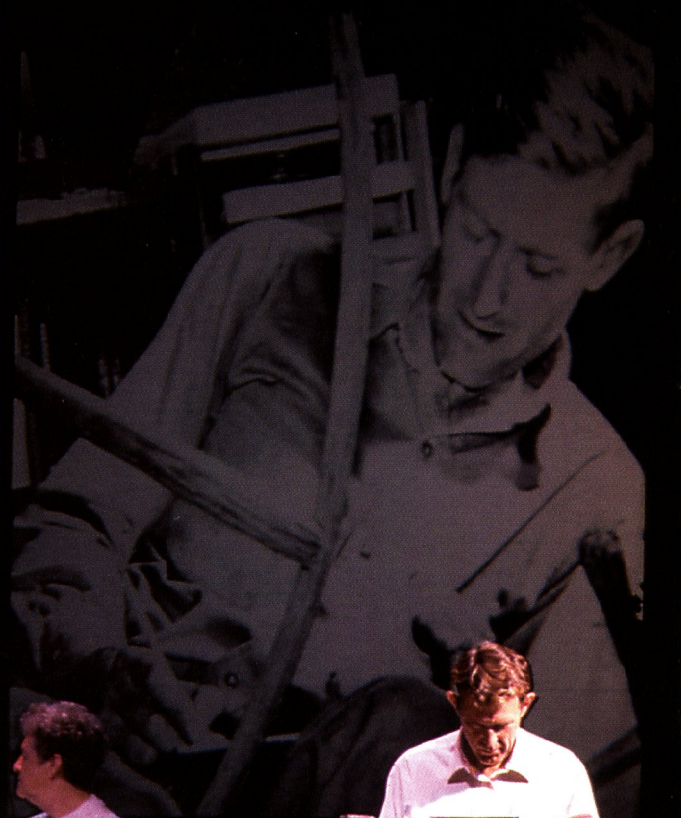
The Reach of Song

a n A p p a l a c h i a n D r a m a

G e o r g i a ' s

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The Reach of Song

an Appalachian Drama

By Tom DeTitta

June 24 - August 23, Tuesday through Saturday 8 p.m.

At Young Harris College Campus
Young Harris, Georgia

The Reach of Song is produced by the
Appalachian Educational and Historical
Society, Inc. Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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Thank You Young Harris College

*A very special thanks to the Young Harris College Board, Dr. Thomas S. Yow, II, president of Young Harris College and the Young Harris College staff for making it possible for us to present this 1997 production of *The Reach of Song*.*

The opportunity to use this fine campus and its facilities and your generous donation of time and energies is greatly appreciated.

The Appalachian Educational and Historical Society, Inc.
Executive Board

THE REACH OF SONG

*"From chips and shards in idle times, I made these stories, shaped these rhymes;
May they engage some friendly tongue when I am past the reach of song."*

Byron Herbert Reece

The Reach of Song is a carefully-wrought chronicle of life as it used to be and still is today in the hills and hollows of southern Appalachia—a place where time once ran still and the mountain streams run chill and cold.

It is the story of the culture of a hardy generous folk; and of the changes brought from the outside world that altered their culture that had been handed down virtually unchanged for generations.

The two-act drama, which begins and ends in the present-day, is told through the eyes of north Georgia writer Byron Herbert Reece, a Pulitzer Prize nominee, who was born, lived and died just a few miles from the theater in which the drama is staged.

The first act deals with Appalachia as it was before World War II, with a way of life that had been handed down for hundreds of years in the hills and hollows.

In act two, the focus shifts to the changes in the lifestyle of the mountain people brought on by World War II and the effects of the outside world's invading culture. It embodies the memories and insights of those natives who are part of *The Reach of Song* cast.

The play is interspersed with recitations of Reece's hauntingly beautiful ballads and poetry. Although Reece is the pivotal character through whose eyes the action is directed, the audience is also treated to glimpses of Reece as seen through the other characters, yielding an intimate knowledge of the ecstasies and the agonies of the artist within.

But the knowledge is delivered with a deft hand and a light touch with generous portions of mountain humor.

The product of more than two years of hard work, research, countless interviews with local people and constant attention to authenticity, *The Reach of Song* is a story that unfolded even as it was written by playwright Tom DeTitta.

"Although the momentum started within me, it soon became one which I could barely keep up with," says DeTitta. "For the two years of research in the mountains, I asked for ideas and received photos, insights, recollections and memories. There isn't a moment in the play that can't be directly traced to something someone told me. There are more, far more, people in this play than just the characters."

DeTitta sought input from Byron Herbert Reece's relatives, his former teachers, students and friends to make certain that the resurrection of Reece was as true to life as the mountain culture portrayed in the play.

The hard work and attention to detail paid off. *The Reach of Song* premiered in 1989 in Hiawassee and played to an audience that grew by 50 percent each week during the last half of its run. Before its second season opened, it was named by the Georgia General Assembly as the state's official historic drama.

From the whirl and gaiety of mountain music and dancing, to the wisdom, gossip and age-old battle of the sexes meted out from the whittler's bench and the quilting bee, *The Reach of Song* is Appalachian life as it was and is—preserved as clearly as jam in a Mason jar.

COBWEB SUPPER

In a cobweb supper, each "courtin' age" girl prepared a homemade meal-for-two of ham, sweet potato pie and the like, packed in a box she decorated herself. The box had tied to it a long string that was entwined with other box supper strings. The young men each took a string and followed it through the bushes to its end where waited a delicious box supper to be eaten in the company of a blushing young lady.



A Portrait of Mountain Culture

Zura Gooch Todd
1905 - 1997

92 Years of
Appalachian Living

Zura Todd became a major resource of information for Playwright Tom DeTitta in his writing the Appalachian story "The Reach of Song." She knew and lived this culture to the fullest and also provided insight on the life of Byron Herbert Reece.

Here is the flavor of her life as written by her daughter Nell Todd Holliday who has been a part of the drama since its opening in 1989.

Zura Gooch Todd was born March 14, 1905 in Union County, Georgia. She was the third child of eight children, two girls and six boys.

She attended a one-room school in Gaddistown and went to Dahlonega to high school. At age 17 she passed the teacher's exam and taught in the one-room school the children she had grown up with. She had finished her second year of teaching when Alvin Todd, from Athens, came looking for vegetables for his produce market. There was a severe drought in Georgia at this time. Zura was sweeping the yard with a brush broom, barefooted when Alvin first saw her. They were married in October, 1925 (married for 62 years). They raised six children, four girls and two boys.

They obtained land that once belonged to Zura's grandfather, Jim Gooch. The log cabin in which they raised their family was built with huge yellow poplar logs, hand hewn with a broad axe. It took only three to build the wall from floor to ceiling. The logs were notched together without nails. It was built when her father was a "lad of a boy" in the 1870's.

Money was scarce on the farm so everything that was needed they made or grew.

Three of the six children were in college when electricity came to Gaddistown in 1947. Education was important to Zura and she would tell the children to work hard, save money, and get a good education so they would not have to work so hard. She believed girls needed an education as much as the boys.



Getting an education was hard for her. When she went to Dahlonega to high school (age 15) her mother sent the little sister (age 8) and an older brother. They lived in a house where they had two rooms and kitchen privilege. She cooked meals for the sister, brother and herself. She washed clothes in the backyard on an open fire.

Since money was so scarce on the farm Zura would boil wood ashes to get the acid to make homemade soap (also to make hominy). This soap was used for washing clothes, hands, and any other use of soap.

When the fifth child was due there was no soap except the homemade which was too strong to bath a new born. A salesman came to the farm and the last dollar they had was used to buy Ivory soap for the baby.

Clothes were washed by heating water in a black iron pot over a wood fire, scrubbed on a scrub board, boiled in the pot and rinsed in a stream of water. Sometimes the clothes would freeze when hung on the wire clothes line and pinned with wooden clothes pins.

The iron pot was used to boil water to scald a hog when killed for meat.

Cooking was done on a wood burning stove or on the fireplace. The stone was used also to heat water for baths in a number two washtub. Also the stove was used to heat the irons for ironing clothes.

Food was grown on the farm and preserved for winter. Some was dried as green beans were strung and hung to make leather britches. Apples were dried, canned, or smoked. Beans, corn, tomatoes, okra and other crops were canned. Meat was canned, smoked or salted.

Farming was done by hand or with a mule most of the years. They grew vegetables such as beans, pepper, rhubarb, squash, collards, corn, cabbage, etc. which was taken to Atlanta to the Farmers' Market.

Corn and buckwheat were grown and carried to the mill to be ground into flour or meal.

Sewing was done by hand or a foot peddled sewing machine. Most of the dresses, sheets, etc. were made from feed or fertilizer sacks. Zura would ask her husband to buy sacks that had the same print so there would be enough for a dress. Some sacks were printed with ink that could be washed out. Flour sacks were bleached and hemmed to be used for baby diapers, dish towels, etc.

Zura and Alvin had the first house to have running water. Discarded fire hose was used to pipe the water to the house from the spring. The sink was made from hewn out yellow poplar. Iron pipe was used inside the house and joined to the fire hose by a piece of wood hollowed out so water could flow through it.

They also built the first chicken house in the community. Folks thought them crazy to put chickens in a house, but when the chickens would lay eggs all winter the other folks soon built chicken houses.

Zura's mother grew dahlias and she gave Zura and Alvin a basket of bulbs. They put an ad in the Market Bulletin and made enough money to pay taxes on the farm that year. They continued to grow dahlias and advertised in magazines such as *Progressive Farmer* where people sent for the bulbs.

The *Atlanta Journal* photographer Kenneth Roges and other staff heard about the dahlia farm. They did full color articles over three years, 1952, 1954, and 1966. The articles were in the Sunday section of the magazine. This brought thousands of people to see the spectacular fields in bloom.

Zura and Alvin would develop new varieties of dahlias and name them to "fit the person." One was named Byron Herbert Reece, for the mountain poet who was a friend and a famous person. They named one (a white one) for Betty Talmadge and presented her a bouquet at the Hiawassee Fair while her husband Herman Talmadge was governor of Georgia.

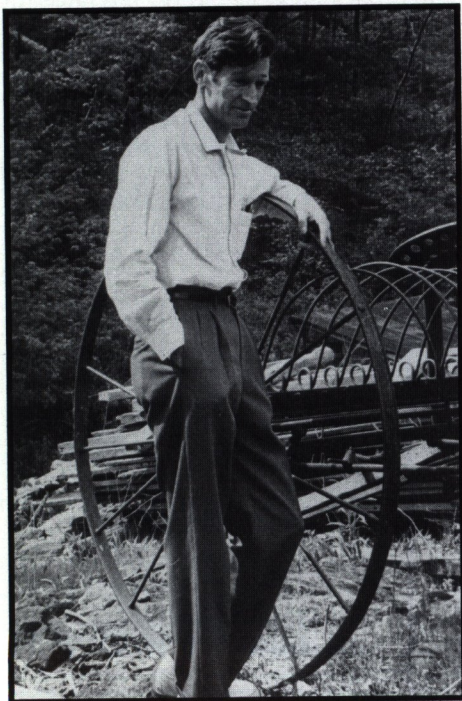
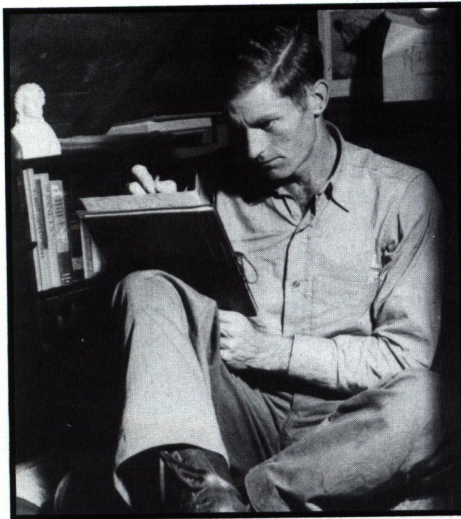
Zura traveled a long way from Union County a few times. She went to Europe in 1969 where she toured nine countries. In 1975 she went as far south as Santiago, Chile and toured three other countries in South America. She also went west to Arizona and north to Canada.

She was still active at age 91 walking a mile up and down a mountain. She walked this for the last time January 29, 1997 for she had a stroke January 31, 1997 and died April 6, 1997 at age 92.

BYRON HERBERT REECE

POET WITH A PLOW

(Sept. 14, 1917 - June 3, 1958)



Photos courtesy of
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

"Byron Herbert Reece could best tell the story of our mountains. His words hold the truth of yesteryear; his life was our lives, too, growing up on a farm in the shadows of Blood Mountain, and going through so many of the changes that we all faced. But what made him different started with his standing and watching, noticing seeing the spirit into every little thing that he came upon."
(Nell Todd Holliday (Nell) act, one, scene one, *THE REACH OF SONG* 1990)

Byron Herbert Reece was either the greatest farmer who ever wrote, or the greatest writer who ever pushed a plow.

Either way, in his short lifetime, the poet/author/ balladeer from rural Appalachia realized a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry. More important to the reticent Reece, he deciphered the magic words whispered from his natural world, recording them for posterity. Named "Byron" after a butcher, "Herbert" after an insurance salesman, and called "Hub" for short, Reece was born fourth in a family of five living children. The ancestors of his father, Juan (Jew-ann) Reece, and his mother, Emma Lance Reece settled in CHOESTOE, a section of Union County during the time of the Cherokees

Hub was born September 14, 1917 in a roughhewn, single-room log cabin at the north base of Blood Mountain, one of the highest peak in Georgia, from whose base cold Wolf Creek meanders its way from the earth's bowels. The cabin sat in a meadow now covered by manmade Lake Trahlyta in Vogel State Park. Blood and Bald (at 4,784 feet the highest in Georgia) are part of the Appalachian mountain chain, among the oldest mountains on earth.

With two older sisters, Eva Mae and Nina Kate, and an older brother, T.J., the cabin was snug. Juan Reece found a larger dwelling a mile north of Blood Mountain in 1921; it was the old house where Emma Reece had grown up and married. Built by her grandparents before the Cherokee Indians were removed from the area, the house was very old and situated in a narrow valley on the banks of Wolf Creek where the sun and fresh air hardly touched it in the course of a day. The move would prove a fateful one, bringing disease to the household, but at the time it seemed the best option to Juan.

Hub cut his teeth on daily Bible read-

ings, folk songs that had been handed down by oral tradition with little change from their Scotch-Irish origins, and ancestral stories. Emma encouraged her young son's penchant for books as best she could, teaching him to read the King James version of the Bible, and Pilgrim's Progress. Just before he turned six, Hub made the daily eight-mile round trip walk to Choestoe Elementary School. The birth of sister Jean that year meant Hub was no longer baby of the family. He was so far beyond his peers that his teacher allowed him to skip the second grade.

When Hub was eight, he joined Salem Methodist Church. He also had a shocking encounter that year with his first automobile. Later on, he would develop a keen interest in cars and airplanes, but a chugging, noisy hunk of tin was no comfort to a young boy who had never known anything more contrary than a mule. By 1930, a road had been graded through the gap to the south, and automobiles became a more common sight, passing only a few yards from the Reece home.

Entering high school in 1931 meant a

CHOESTOE

Choestoe (Cho-ee-sto-ee) is the Cherokee name for the militia district in Union County, Georgia where Byron Herbert Reece was born. Its interpreted meaning is "Place of The Dancing Rabbits."

Besides its beautiful mountain ringed valleys, Choestoe has long distinguished itself in the area of education, in spite of one-room schoolhouses that were poorly equipped. According to volume one of "Sketches of Union County History" (p. 35), "There are more college graduates from the Choestoe District according to population than any other place in Georgia." As recounted in *THE REACH OF SONG*, the Choestoe section has produced two state supreme court justices, one chief justice, and a state school superintendent.

"Unusual mentality. Few people understand him. Cynical, truthful, dependable, determined. Has few contacts with folks, and wants but few. Except in mathematics, he is about the best pupil we have sent you. Widely read. Tastes are literary and artistic. Writes unusually good poetry and short stories, but is like Thoreau about his work. Knows he has ability, but doesn't give a straw whether you know it or not." (Dr. Nicholson)

trip of ten miles to the nearest town of Blairsville. High school principal Dr. J. M. Nicholson tried to develop Hub's uncanny literary talents, but Hub scorned math. He still graduated second in a class of 19 in 1935. That fall, Hub entered Young Harris College, nearly twenty miles away. Hub's transcript carries the recommendation of Dr. Nicholson: "Unusual mentality. Few people understand him. Cynical, truthful, dependable, determined. Has few contacts with folks, and wants but few. Except in mathematics, he is about the best pupil we have sent you. Widely read. Tastes are literary and artistic. Writes unusually good poetry and short stories, but is like Thoreau about his work. Knows he has ability, but doesn't give a straw whether you know it or not."

Hub's college education was soon interrupted by his father's illness; he dropped out to stay home and look after the farm. Fate had handed Hub a life of sweating brow and aching back, with late nights sitting up, exhausted after a day's work, writing long after the fire had died down on the hearth. Hub didn't mind the hard work; he enjoyed farming and took pride in having one of the neatest farms on Choestoe.

Life on the farm was pleasant, with family Bible devotionals, suppers of beans, cornbread and milk, and evenings gathered around the fire. But the lack of other literary minds made it lonely. Hub often read for hours in his attic bedroom until the kerosene lamp oil ran out.

In 1936, Hub's father was diagnosed with tuberculosis. In a few years, his mother would also get TB. Perhaps in an effort to exercise the writing demon from his soul in the face of increasing family responsibilities, Reece burned all the poems he had written by the end of 1935. But the demon would not die. In 1937, his first published poem, "Return to Remembrance," appeared in the local newspaper. By 1938, Reece had published a

total of thirty-one poems in literary journals and magazines. All this productivity came despite the weight of 25 acres to till, numerous stock to feed and water, wood to chop, cows to milk and all the other chores attendant on a farm.

Through a small scholarship, careful saving and working alternate quarters on the college farm, Hub returned to Young Harris College in 1938, where he was invited to join a literary organization, the Quill Club. The club met weekly in the home of Professor Willis Lufkin Dance who became one of the greatest cultivators of Hub's talents. In 1939, Atlanta Constitution editor Ralph McGill read one of Hub's poems and met Hub at Young Harris. McGill described him as not unlike a "young Lincoln" but too shy to read other works.

That winter, Hub again had to stay home. He kept up with college happenings with letters to his friend, Phillip

Grear. Spring quarter 1939, Hub returned to Young Harris. Quill Club visiting speaker, Roosevelt Walker, a University of Georgia English professor and expert on folk songs and ballads, so impressed Hub that he began to produce ballads after that date. Hub's college career ended in 1940. He refused to take the required math and French courses to get his degree. More ominously, the raging war in Europe threatened to strike home. Friends were marrying or joining up for military duty, but Hub had to go back to the farm and look after his sickly parents.

From 1940-42, Hub taught Zion Elementary School in the Dooly District of Union County. Qualification standards for teachers were not yet uniform, so Hub's lack of a degree was no problem. But the Tennessee Valley Authority, which had begun work on a dam in North Carolina in 1937 was planning to flood

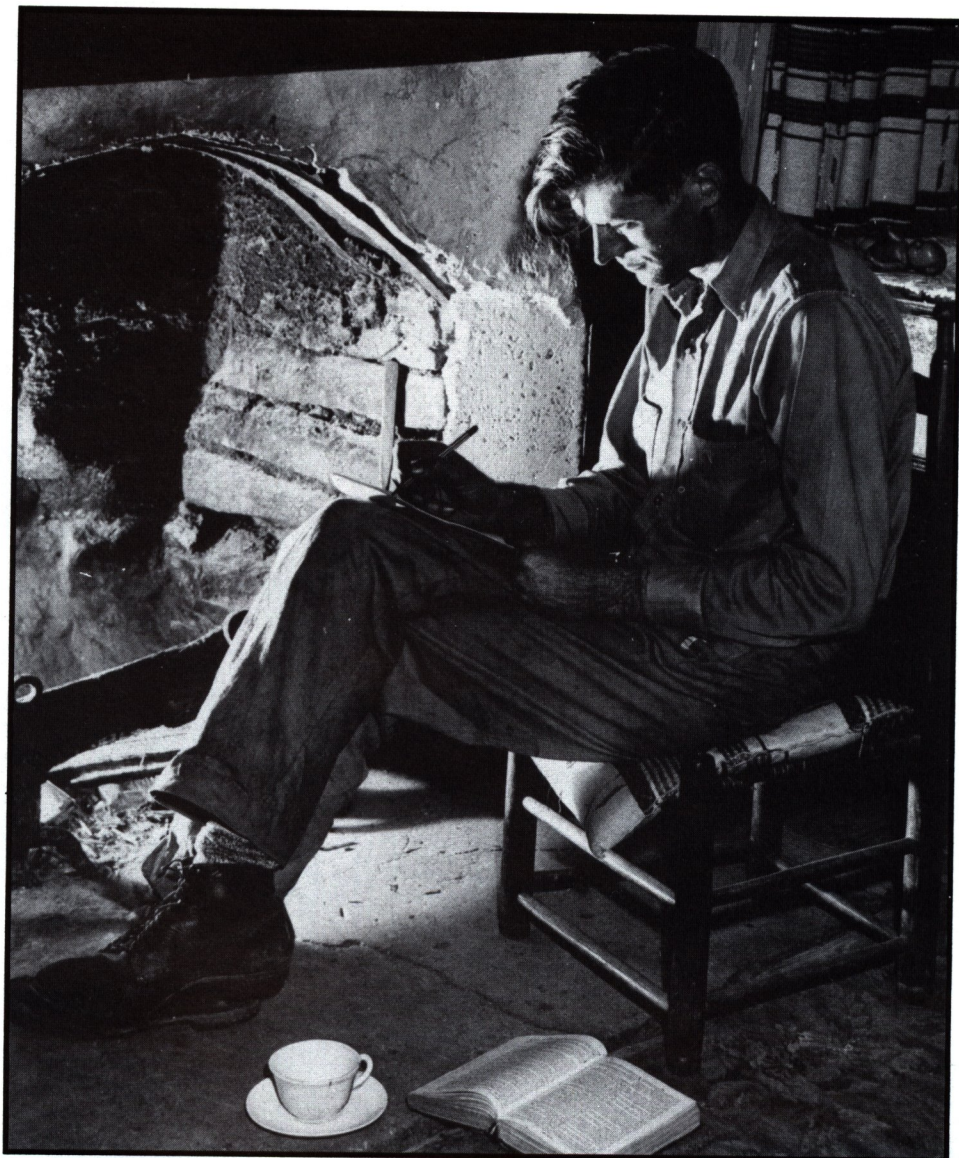
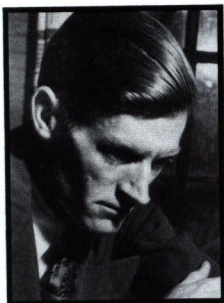


Photo courtesy of The Atlanta/Constitution



REECE Wins Honors and Awards

In 1943 Reece's "Ballad of the Bones" won the BEST POEM OF THE YEAR award from "American Poet" magazine.

Before leaving for California he received the HIGHEST AWARD FOR FICTION by the Georgia Writers Conference.

In 1950 Reece was nominated for the PULITZER PRIZE IN POETRY.

In 1952 "A Song of Joy" brought the GUGGENHEIM AWARD.

Also during his career, Reece received on five separate occasions the Georgia Writers Associations LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS.

the region's best low-lying farmlands in order to build a huge reservoir of water to use in generating electrical power. Most of Hub's students had to move, and his teaching position ended.

Still, the Reece family now had electric lights and bought a radio, on which Hub enjoyed listening to classical music picked up from a New York station at night. The radio also linked the family to happenings in the outside world.

After Pearl Harbor, Hub answered the draft call. But the army deferred enlisting an underweight young man who had a family history of tuberculosis and had a nervous "tic" on the side of his face. Meanwhile, Hub published in smaller journals and magazines nationwide. His name was becoming familiar in print, but he was paid almost nothing for his work.

In 1943 Hub's first "big time" attention came from nationally known Kentucky author, Jesse Stuart. Stuart was so moved by Hub's work that he went to bat for Hub with his own publisher, E.P. Dutton. Dutton liked Hub's work, and reluctantly agreed to publish a collection though there was almost no market for poetry, even great poetry. Hub titled his new book, "Ballad of the Bones," after his ballad based on the 37th chapter of Ezekiel. The ballad won Hub the "Best Poem of the Year" award from "American Poet" magazine. But the praise that meant most to Hub was that from his

mother, who when she had read "Ballad of the Bones," declared in her quiet mountain way, "It's something." Hub was mowing hay when the first copies of his book arrived from Dutton. That afternoon, he characteristically continued mowing.

"Ballad of the Bones," brought long-awaited critical acclaim. Hub was featured in "The Atlanta Journal" and other national publications. The waves of national accolades for his poetry did not wash into Choestoe. To many friends and neighbors, "making a book" did not mean as much as tomorrow's weather.

Money did not come, but invitations as guest of honor did. Hub attended as many events as his home situation allowed. On returning home from one such event, Hub learned his favorite professor, W. L. Dance, had killed himself in a dormitory room at Young Harris College. Public appearances ate into the time for making a living. Hub began to decline them, but he could not escape his popularity. He answered his fan mail himself after long, hard days on the farm, then worked on new poems and novels.

Between long hours, worries over money and his mother's health, and working on his next novel, Hub's health was beginning to fail. When "Better a Dinner of Herbs" was accepted by Dutton in 1950, Hub signed an advance contract for another novel; another poetry collection, "Bow Down in Jericho" was



Photos courtesy of The Atlanta Journal/Constitution

scheduled for summer release. Publication of "Herbs" still was not enough for Hub to finance a new home for his family. Most of the money was borrowed from his sister's insurance policy. His twenties behind him, Hub's young years had not been spent in the carefree pleasures of youth; moreover, in the current press of duty, poverty and work, there seemed little chance of love or marriage.

The specter of old age shadowed the man who had never been young. He sensed a growing urgency to get things done and a shortage of time in which to do them. Hub did not like the city, with its over-warm buildings that made him ill. But, when he could, he accepted engagements in Atlanta, more than a hundred miles from home.

Hub accepted an offer to serve as a Poet-in-Residence at the University of California at Los Angeles. But as the time neared, his enthusiasm faded. The family's finances and health were poor. Hub was reduced to buying copies of his own books from Dutton on credit. One of the few local honors he received came on April 17, 1950 when the Lions Clubs of Union and Towns counties with local chambers of commerce made Hub guest of honor at a luncheon in Blairsville. "The Atlanta Constitution" ran a large spread of photos and text, and WSB radio of Atlanta gave him six minutes of air time.

Only a week before leaving for California, Hub received the highest award for fiction by a Georgia writer from the Georgia Writers Conference. The stint at UCLA proved tiring. Hub accomplished little, producing only one poem during his stay, "I Know A Valley Green With Corn," reminiscent of the Choestoe Valley he missed. It also proved unprofitable. After expenses and debts were paid, he had little left of the less than \$1,200 he received.

In 1950, Hub was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, but the honor was not awarded to him. In 1952, Dutton published "A Song of Joy" and a Guggenheim award came through. Hub was also offered positions as Poet-in-Residence at the University of Georgia, Emory University, and Young Harris College. He accepted the one at Young Harris, commuting daily from the farm.

That fall, he accepted the fourth of five Georgia Writers Association Literary Achievement Awards he would receive in his career. Hub presented it to Young Harris College, where it remains on permanent exhibit in the Reece collection.

That winter, 1953-54, a doctor handed Hub the verdict on his health, tuberculosis. In February 1954, Hub entered Battey Hospital, the state tuberculosis facility in Rome. The treatment was free, and he was promised the chance to go home in a few months if he improved. Hub chafed under hospitalization, and once commented that if he were to write about his experiences in the sanatorium, he would title it, "Chronicle in Hell." A few friends visited, but most stayed away. One spring morning, Reece simply left the hospital and went home. He tried to discourage friends from visiting for fear of infecting them, but a faithful few

mountains. But it was never finished, despite a 1957 Guggenheim award.

In June 1956, Hub taught at Young Harris College because he needed the money. He wrote to Elliot Graham: "I've just reached my wall. . .the absolute limit of my energy and I couldn't do more...if my life depended on it...waiting it out is a luxury I can't afford anymore. Success and I just missed connections somewhere along the line...I've got to eat...So I'll meet my English classes as long as I can..."

Hub stayed on campus and went home regularly to check on his father. In the fall of 1957, Hub again taught



came anyway, like his old friends Philip Greear and wife, Mildred.

That summer, his mother died of TB. His familial champion for his work was gone. Just a week before Emma died, Hub penned one of his most haunting poems, "Lullaby," in which a mother sings her child to sleep.

Four years overdue, Hub finished "The Hawk and the Sun," about the lynching of an innocent black man. "The Season of Flesh" also came out in 1955. Hub contracted for another book, "The Axe and the Sword," which ironically, was to have been an epic history of the

part-time at Young Harris. He was smoking more heavily, drinking lots of coffee and not taking care of himself.

On June 3, 1958, Hub was found dead in his dormitory quarters with a bullet hole through his diseased lung and his .32 automatic caliber pistol at his side. His students' final exams were graded and Mozart piano sonata in "D" was playing on his phonograph. It was the same room in which his mentor Dr. W. L. Dance had killed himself more than twelve years before. In only three months Hub would have been forty-one. He was laid to rest at the foot of his mother's

grave in Old Union Cemetery in Young Harris, less than a mile from where he died and twenty miles from his Choestoe home.

The writer who found such joy in the natural world had found the only release he knew from worldly cares. Today, the Choestoe birthplace of Byron Herbert Reece also lies in a watery grave beneath Vogel's Lake Trahlyta, fed by the creek that whispered so much of its poetry to him. But in the intervening years between that clear, crisp September day when Hub was born, to the last days of his lonely, disease-ridden life, the extraordinarily talented poet with a plow gave the world a collection of hauntingly beautiful works that will never die.



"You know, Byron was like us in so many ways, yet, in a lot of ways he was different. He never got to be famous, like, say, the Grand Canyon is famous. But when people find something he wrote, it's like what happens to a stranger coming over the mountain from Hiawassee into Young Harris for the first time. Fella might not have been expecting nothing. Might've thought he was just driving along Highway 76, no where nears anything like a Grand Canyon. But right when he tops the hill, all at once, there's the most beautiful view he'd ever seen. That's kinda what I've heard people say who read something of Byron's for the first time." (Maybelle, act two, scene three, THE REACH OF SONG)

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Collections,
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Byron Herbert Reece Papers,
University of Georgia Libraries,
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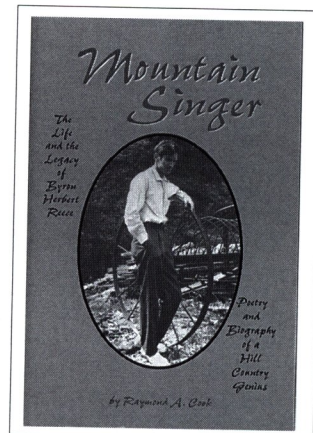
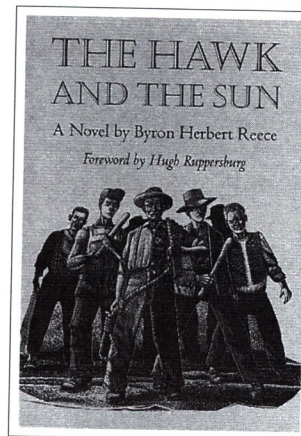
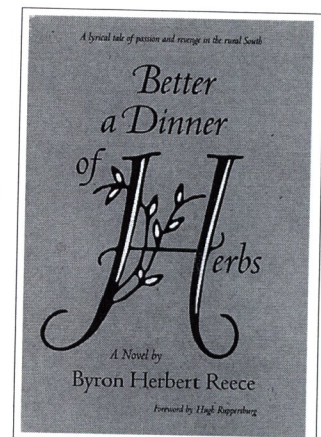
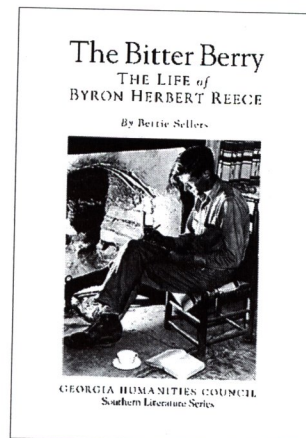
Better a Dinner of Herbs - A Novel by Reece
A lyrical tale of passion and revenge in the rural South.

The Hawk and The Sun - A Novel by Reece
The Story of one day in the life of Dandelion, a physically impaired man who is the sole black resident in the town of Tilden.

Books about Reece

Mountain Singer by Raymond A. Cook.
A Biography with Poetry on Byron Herbert Reece

The Bitter Berry by Bettie Sellers...A Biography with Poetry on Byron Herbert Reece.



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and Historical Society, Inc.**

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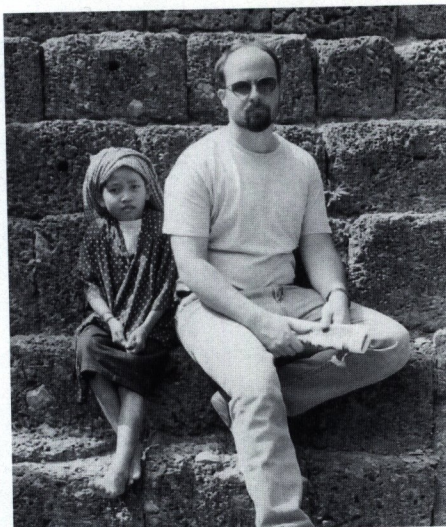
Tom DeTitta
Murphy, NC

B.C. Cloer
Hiawassee, GA

Jack Schultz
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Thomas Yow
Young Harris, GA

**Tom DeTitta
Playwright**



Tom DeTitta and friend, Angor Wat, Cambodia

As a playwright, journalist, and author, Tom DeTitta has been telling the stories of people throughout the world since he stuck his thumb out near Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and hitchhiked 8,000 miles across the United States.

The first literary result of his travels, *I Think I'll Drop You Off in Deadwood*, chronicled the people and the personal revelations found from a life where, for six months, he never knew where he would be sleeping that night.

After freelance writing for such publications as the New York Times and the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Mr. DeTitta then became engaged in more long term relationships with his subject matter, spending two-to-three years researching historic plays. *The Reach of Song* was his first such effort.

"Historic dramas have the unique ability to draw back the curtain on the history and culture of a place through a story that is directly relevant to its subject matter," DeTitta said.

In addition to writing *Reach of Song*, DeTitta was commissioned for the Quincentennial by the Eberly Foundation and the Pennsylvania Museum and Historic Commission to tell the story of turn-of-the-century immigrants in what became his show *Streets of Gold*. Georgia Southwestern College Foundation later commissioned him to write *And Grace Will Lead Me Home, the American POW Drama*, which is running this summer, July 5th through August 16th in Americus, Georgia.

Next summer, he will be premiering an outdoor drama in Oregon City, Oregon, that tells the story of the Oregon Trail from the conflicting perspectives and world experiences of the settlers and the Native Americans. He has also been commissioned to tell the story of western Virginia's coal and railroad history in the town that holds the region's namesake: Appalachia.

His ongoing ability to tell the story of people and place has culminated in his being appointed Director of the Center for Community-Based Theater: World Communities at Georgia Southwestern State University. A part of the University of Georgia system, the Center is established to study the unique methodology required to write and present historic dramas, as well as to work with communities throughout the world to develop theater that is directly relevant to the place from which it was created.

The Center is currently working to develop projects in Cambodia and Eastern Europe, where the celebration of history and culture through theater has a particularly profound resonance for a peoples whose history and culture were forbidden.

As a writer of many places, none of which he considers home, DeTitta challenges the conventional wisdom: "Write what you know."

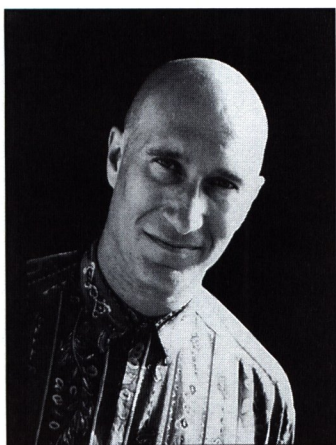
"Writing ought to be as much of a discovery for the writer as it is for the audience: that's what makes it exciting to both. If you're writing about something you already know, there's not much of an adventure to it. I think you should write what you want to know about – what's within your grasp to know – then research in every way possible."

A magna-cum-laude graduate of Duke University, DeTitta was brought to the theater as drummer for pit orchestras, where he initially learned the ropes by watching innumerable productions, innumerable times. He also thinks that his most appropriate training for reacting to the ongoing and unexpected challenges of being a producer were the years spent deflecting pucks as an ice hockey goalie in high school and in college.

DeTitta was a 1997 recipient of the North Carolina Council Arts Council Fellowships.

The Reach of Song

Staff & Cast



R. CHARLES OTTE
Artistic Director

Charles Otte is pleased to be returning this season as the director for *The Reach of Song*. Currently a resident of Los Angeles, Mr. Otte has worked around the country in theatre, opera, and film. As Producing Artistic Director of Project III Ensemble Theatre in New York, Mr. Otte headed an ensemble of actors that received high praise for their talent and creative vision.

While in New York, Mr. Otte's directing credits included *Flood*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Baal*, *The Balcony*, and the world premier of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Bliss*. He also created and directed *The Cuchulain Cycle* based on the writings of W.P. Yeates; co-directed the *Good Woman of Setzuan* with Andrei Serban at the A.R.T., and directed the one woman show *Urban Diva*.

His recently directed Philip Glass' new opera, *La Belle at La Bete*, which received its American premiere at the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Previous work with Mr. Glass includes re-staging the Lincoln Center production of *Songs From Liquid Days*, staging the *Civil Wars* at Carnegie Hall, and directing Mr. Glass' opera *The Juniper Tree* for the Houston Opera.

Mr. Otte's film credits include *Into The Light* and *Caffeine* at the University of Southern California where he was the recipient of the John Huston award for directing excellence. He recently directed two films for Concorde/New Horizons, *I'm Not a Ghost* and *Mission Invisible*.

He produced and directed the CD-Rom game *Month Python and The Quest for the Holy Grail* and was named one of the top 100 multimedia producers of 1996.

He plays fiddle with the band "Lies Like Truth."

Playwright Tom DeTitta
Artistic Director Charles Otte
Production Mgr. Philip Albert of Stage Right Entertainment
Musical Director Jeff Bauman
Choreographer Lindsey Fussell
Set Designer Dr. W. Joseph Stell
Lighting Designer Scott Ross
Costumer Anne Wolf
Production Stage Manager Stacy Randall
Assistant Stage Manager/Props Terri Hoffman
Technical Director Isaiah Jervis
Master Electrician/Proj. Operator David Hale
Projections Photographer Russ Owen Youngblood
Set Construction Stage Right Entertainment, Inc.
Executive Director J. William Wolf
Box Office Manager Tom Jeffery

Ricky Barnes Zack, Editor, Scholar
Lynn Blackburn Robin, Scholar
Diamond Clark Sara
Joshua Cox Larry, Reviewer
Kathryn Danielle Bernice, Scholar
Ilana DiBasi ... Quilter, Literary Agent., & Annabelle
Ken Ensley Whittler, Musician
James Farist James, Ledford
Hazel Farmer Maybelle
Christopher Graham Al, Literary Agent
Shannon Herbert Susie Mae
Nell Holliday Nell
Furman Lunsford Musician
Gregory Dove Lush Harry, Ralph McGill,
Doctor, Preacher, Announcer
Joyce McManious Emma Reece, Quilter
Peter Morse Reece
Elsie Hughes Nelson Quilter
Fiddlin' J.D. Robinson Band Leader, REA Man
Casey Shadix Clarence
Roberta Voyles Musician

*The Reach of Song is funded in part
by a grant from the Georgia State
Assembly.*

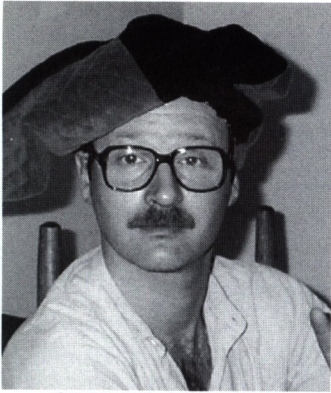
SPECIAL CREDITS

Atlanta Ballet & Alliance Theater of Atlanta
for equipment loaned

Original Music by J.D. Robinson:

Tammy's Waltz, *Heather's Trip to Murphy*.
The Weaver Song written by Kristen Yarborough,
J.D. Robinson, Charlie Otte, Fred Sanders

Produced by The Appalachian Educational and Historical Society, Inc.



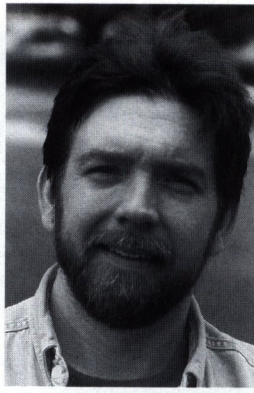
PHILIP ALBERT
Production Manager

Philip Albert has been in show business for more than 20 years in many different capacities. He is a partner in and the producer for the **Aurora Theatre** in Duluth, Georgia as well as **Stage Right Entertainment, Inc.**, a production services company.

He has served as master electrician, production stage manager and lighting designer for the **Atlanta Ballet** and in various technical positions at **The Fox Theater** in Atlanta.

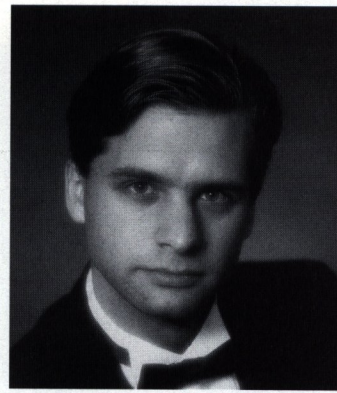
In his youth he worked with **The Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival** for three years and also received a BFA from The University of Cincinnati.

He worked on *The Reach of Song* its very first season and is always pleased to return to this beautiful region and its hospitable people.



SCOTT ROSS
Lighting Designer

Scott Ross has survived in the entertainment industry for a quarter of a century. In that time he has provided "atmosphere" for over 500 shows. Mr. Ross is a member of The Stage Managers Association, Actors Equity Association, the Production Manager for the **Aurora Theatre** in Duluth, Georgia and co-owner of **Stage Right Entertainment, Inc.**



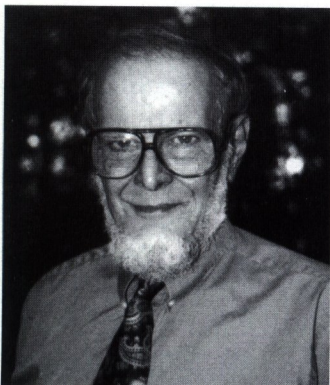
JEFF BAUMAN
Music Director

Jeff Bauman has performed lead roles with opera companies throughout the eastern United States, most recently singing Count Danilo in Franz Lehar's *Merry Widow* with the Savoyards Light Opera of Atlanta. Other favorite roles include Sweeny in *Sweeny Todd* and Billy in *Anything Goes*. In addition to performing, Mr. Bauman has directed both opera and musical theatre with a repertoire ranging from *South Pacific* to Menotti's *The Medium*. Jeff is the head of the choral music department at Young Harris College, and resides in Blairsville with his wife Diane and daughters Kenna and Adele.



LINDSAY FUSSELL
Choreographer

Lindsay Fussell teaches at the Chattanooga Theatre Center in Chattanooga, TN. She has extensive credits as a choreographer: stage (includes) *Big River*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Evita*, and *Grease*; for film: *Island Girl*, as well as television commercials. She has co-written, directed and choreographed many musical revues, including the Grand Opening of the Tennessee Aquarium and *Molly Goes to Hollywood* for the Molly Brown Dinner Theatre in Hannibal, MO. Lindsay has also choreographed for the Companhia de Danca in Lisbon, Portugal, the Festival de Jazz in Manaus, Brazil, and served as guest faculty at Stephens College in Columbia, MO. As a performer, she has played leading roles in *A Chorus Line*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Cabaret*, among others. Lindsay is co-director and performs with the Chattanooga Improv Co. and manages an original blues rock band "Sun Revelator." Lindsay served as entertainment coordinator for the Ocoee Olympic Village - Atlanta '96 Olympics.



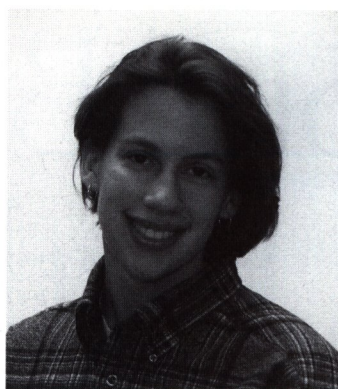
John William Wolf
Executive Director

I would ask that you note the advertisers in this program along with the Board of Directors on page 12 and the Patrons list on page 15, 28 and 29. The patron list may also be found on the display in the lobby. These are individuals and businesses who have given generously of both their time and their money. They obviously have a special love for the rich culture and history of this area and are anxious to preserve and present it to you. When you stop in their business or see them in passing, please thank them. Without their support this production would not be possible. If you would like to become a part of this group, please call me, additional support is always welcome.



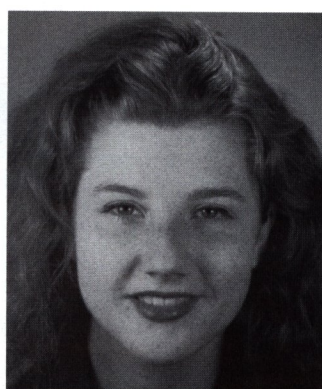
ANNE WOLF
Costumer

Anne lives in Young Harris, having grown up "just a little further up the Appalachian chain." She has a degree in education from Mount Union College, Alliance, Ohio and presently works for Hayesville Printing. But her greatest love is weaving cloth for clothing. She is a member of the Chattahoochee Handweavers Guild in Atlanta and the local Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild. This is her eighth season with *The Reach of Song*. Anne has two daughters and one granddaughter. (And a grandmother whose name was Emma Reese).



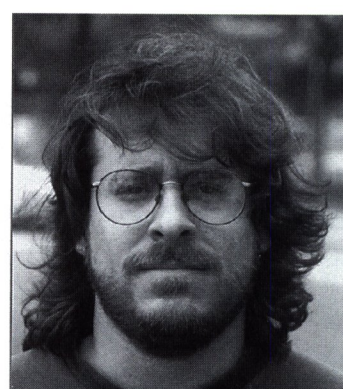
STACY RANDALL
Production Stage Manager

Stacy is currently a Senior at Austin College in Sherman, Texas pursuing her BA in Theatre. At school, she has Stage Managed *Holy Ghosts* and *Passionate Women*. She was also Assistant Director of *Buried Child*. She hopes to get a MFA in Stage Management and have a career as a professional Stage Manager. This is her first time in the Georgia mountains and she is enjoying the beautiful landscape. Special thanks go to her family and to Rodney.



TERRI HOFFMAN
Assistant Stage Manager

Terri is a Junior at Georgia College and State University working on her BA in Theatre. She is from Lawrenceville, Georgia. Recently she was Stella Mae in *Come Back to the Give and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* as well as appearing in *The Crucible* and *Hamlet*. She has Stage Managed *Look Homeward Angel*, costumed *Godspell*, and was the Assistant Stage Manager for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. She is very pleased to be part of *The Reach of Song*. Special thanks go to her family and especially her Mom and to Casey. Seek a life useful.



F. RANDY DECELLE
Master Electrician

Randy joins *The Reach of Song* company after having just completed his MFA with The University of Alabama. He spent the last year as a Production Intern with Alabama Shakespeare Festival working in electrics, scenery, props and as Assistant Production Manager. He joined the University after working for three years as a Project Engineer in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. He received his Bachelors Degree in Electrical Engineering from Auburn University in 19981. He has been working in and around the entertainment industry for the last twenty-five years. He is enjoying the peace and quiet of the beautiful North Georgia Mountains.



ISAIAH JERVIS
Technical Director

Isaiah is thrilled to be spending the summer in the North Georgia mountains. He is a Gemini, partial to chocolate and enjoys disc golf. Seeks same for relationship. I love you Laura! Hi, Mom.



DAVID HALE
Master Electrician

David holds a Bachelors Degree in Theatre from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is currently the Assistant Technical Director at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He recently served as Technical Director the the Chattanooga Theatre Center.

*Continuing Members of
the Original Production

Thank You,
AT&T
for your
corporate
sponsorship
and
continued
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*The Reach of
Song*

Why Your Ball Will Fly Farther In The Blue Ridge Mountains.



AND OTHER TALL TALES OF NORTH GEORGIA

It seems that just about every one of our visiting golfers, no matter how skillful, shoots their best game here at Brasstown. At least, that's what we're always hearing.

It could be that our air is cleaner, crisper, and a

bit thinner, too. It could be our incredible panoramic mountain views, or that our bent-grass greens are a little greener than most. Maybe the stories of birdies and eagles are just good old-fashioned tall tales, the kind for which these North Georgia mountains are so well known.

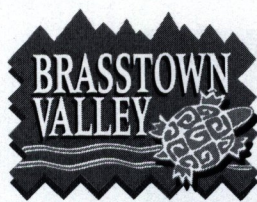
And that's probably the case, considering

the challenges you'll face on our 18-hole championship links-style course. An epic 7,000 yards, it poses countless bunkers, a slope rating of 134,

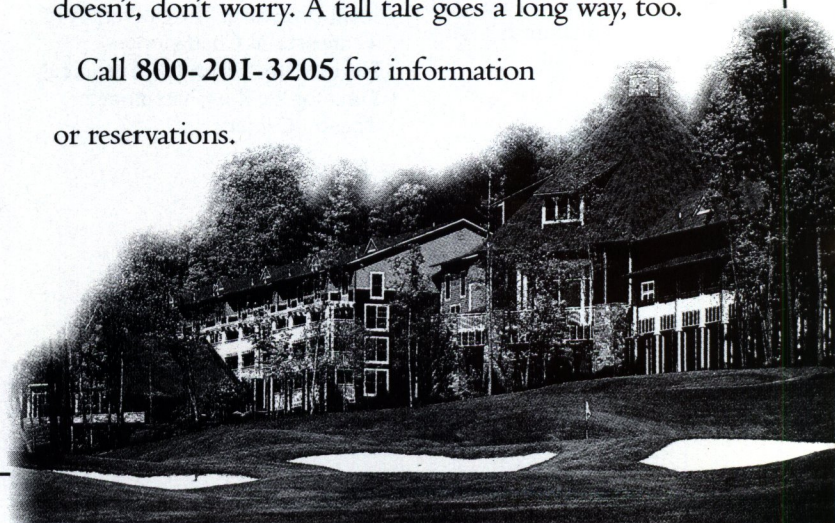
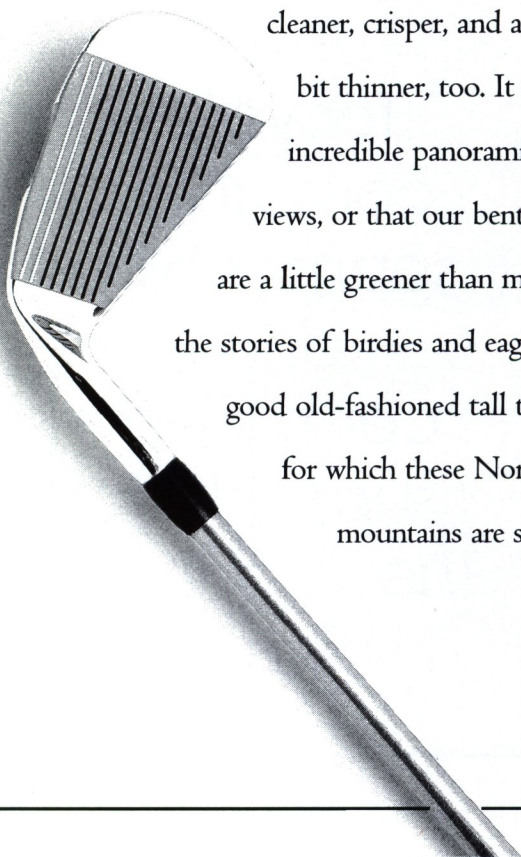
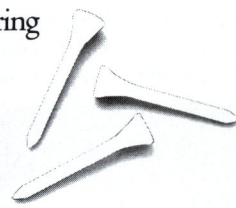
and water on 10 of its 18 holes. It's no wonder we're rated one of the top 10 resort golf courses.

So, come see why your ball flies farther here in the North Georgia mountains. And if for some reason it doesn't, don't worry. A tall tale goes a long way, too.

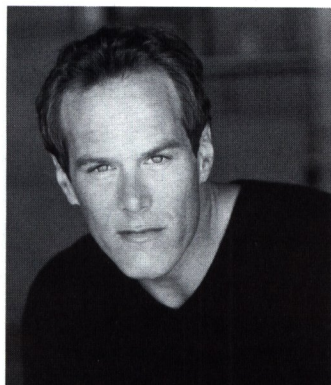
Call 800-201-3205 for information or reservations.



Georgia's Mountain Resort
Young Harris, Georgia



Presenting the 1997 Cast of *The Reach of Song*



RICK BARNES

Rick is originally from Tucson, AZ and has spent the last eight years in Los Angeles and five years prior in New York.

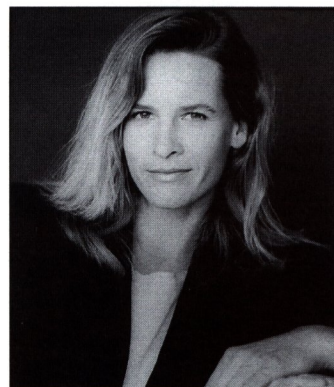
In the course of his career, Rick has been an actor, a camera man, set builder, scenic artist, art director, assistant director, and he spent a year designing and building the interior for one of the night clubs on Pleasure Island at Walt Disney World.

Rick's television credits include *Guiding Light* and the ABC movie *Teen Father*. He has also appeared in numerous T.V. commercials such as Levis, Coca-Cola, and American Airlines. He has made several independent films, one of which won awards at the Milan, Italy Film Festival two years ago. He is a scholarship student at the highly regarded Howard Fine Studio in LA, and is delighted to be making his stage debut this summer. Off hours are being spent finishing a script that he plans to produce and go into serious debt with next spring.



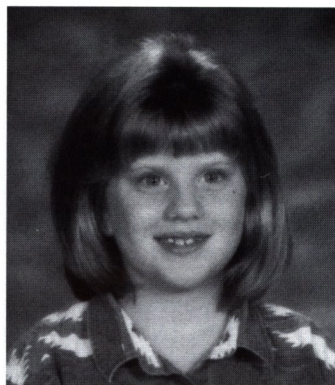
LYNN BLACKBURN

Originally from Dallas, Texas, Lynn's 'big break' came at the tender age of 7 when she played Mrs. Smith in her school's Christmas play. She said her lines (and mouthed everyone else's) and eventually made it to the stage of the University of Mississippi where she is currently a senior nearing the completion of degrees in both Theatre and English. Along the way her favorite roles have included Sarah in *The Lover*, Elaine in *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, Elmire in *Tartuffe*, and Artie in *Eleemosynary*. She lovingly dedicates her performance to the memory of her Nana (who might have been a vaudeville sensation...).



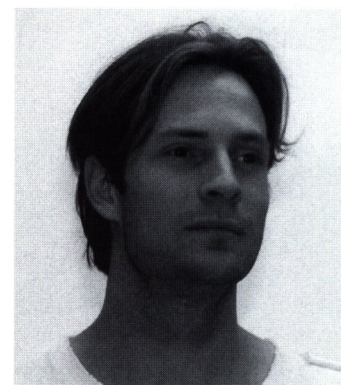
KATHRYN DANIELLE

"I'm going to the mountains of North Georgia to do a play! Thank you, God!" echoed in the hills of Hollywood where Kathryn resides. She began her career in NYC acting in several off and off-off Broadway shows as a company member of Circle Rep Lab, Art & Work Ensemble and the Double Image Theatre. After having moved to Los Angeles, she guest starred on *Frasier*, *Dear John*, *Cheers*, *Knots Landing* and was featured in Brian DePalma's film *Bonfire of The Vanities*. *The Reach of Song* is her first regional play and she is very grateful ... it is here on this piece of wondrous earth.



DIAMOND CLARK

Diamond is a third grader at Hayesville Elementary School and is the sister of Casey Shadix. Following in her brother's footsteps she has been a active student in the Murphy School of Dance for 4 years. She has had instruction in tap, jazz, and ballet. She has also been in the productions *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* and *Jungle Book* at the Peacock Playhouse in Hayesville. Diamond also enjoys art, horses, and chasing butterflies.



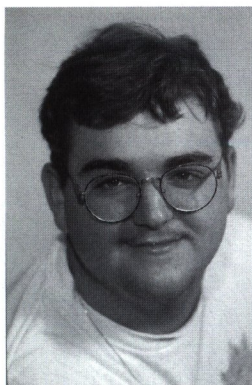
JOSHUA COX

Josh lives in North Carolina and is currently enrolled at Western Carolina University. He has performed in numerous stage productions including *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Midsummer Nights Dream* and *Time of Your Life*. He enjoys playing music and is an experienced singer and songwriter. He is happy to be a part of *The Reach of Song* and hopes for a wonderful season.



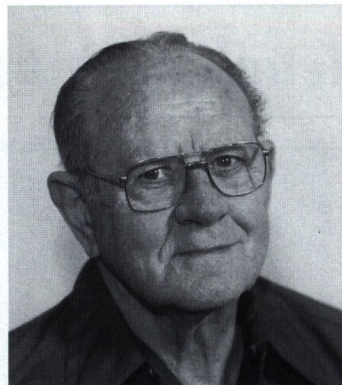
ILANA DIBLASI

Ilana, originally from Columbus, Georgia, is a Junior BFA candidate at the University of Mississippi. She has enjoyed several roles such as Rachel in *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, Anybody's in *West Side Story*, Cinderella in *Into the Woods*, and Sergeant Sara Brown in *Guys and Dolls*. She hopes to pursue an acting career in theatre and is interested in spending time auditioning in New York City after she graduates.



KEN ENSLEY

Ken originally began his music career by taking up the drums as a child. Basically a self-taught musician, Ken taught himself to play the electric bass, the mandolin, guitar and the McNally strum stick while sitting around his father's pawn shop, after his family moved the business and themselves to the North Georgia Mountains, where his father and grandfather were both born and raised. Ken wants to dedicate this season to his son who isn't born yet. Kenneth Martin Blake Ensley will be born around August 1.



JAMES FARIST

Back for another year of *The Reach of Song*, James Farist is a Hiawassee actor who adds his touch of authenticity to the drama. Born to an old-time Baptist preacher and reared in Ellijay, Georgia, Farist spent his early years leading the singing at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Gilmer County, GA.

At 48, this resourceful man taught himself to play the fiddle and began playing with bands ten years later.

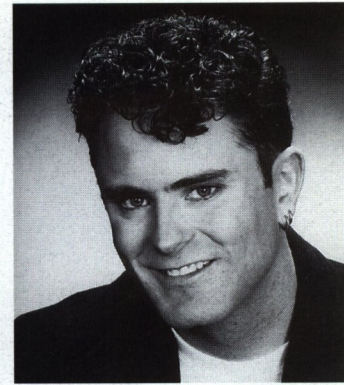
Farist has also appeared in the Atlanta production of *Appalachian Christmas*.

A retired diesel engine mechanic, Farist has lived in Hiawassee for the past fifteen years with his family. He enjoys antique cars and fiddling.



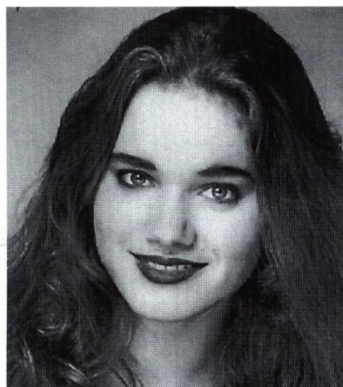
HAZEL FARMER

Hazel has lived on the same farm in Union County for 68 years. She is an active member of Philadelphia Baptist Church and sings in the choir. She plants a small garden and does her own fall canning and freezing for winter food. Her pleasures are filled with one daughter, three grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Hazel says, "I enjoy sitting in the swing on my front porch, late in the evening watching the cattle and the deer grazing in the pasture or just watching a beautiful sunset."



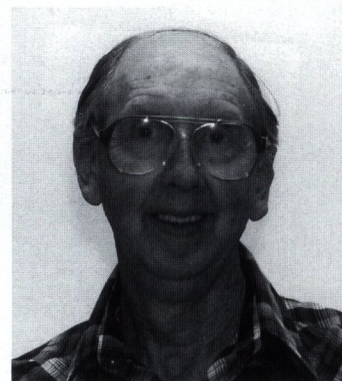
CHRISTOPHER GRAHAM

A native of Charlotte, NC and a graduate of Appalachian State University, Chris now resides in Atlanta, Georgia where he is a member of the Alliance Theatre's Professional Acting Internship. Some favorite roles include Alan Strang in *Equus*, Captain Bluntshli in *Arms and the Man*, The Devil in *TiJean and His Brothers* and Silvius in *As You Like It*. Chris also toured with Fawltly Ekwpiment, an improv/comedy troupe.



SHANNON HERBERT

Shannon Herbert, from New Orleans, Louisiana is a third year theatre major at the University of Mississippi. Her performance credits include: Jane Ashton in *Brigadoon*; Liesl in *Sound of Music*; Ado Annie in *Oklahoma*; Catherine in *A View from the Bridge*; *A Chorus Line*, *The Tempest*, and Anita in *West Side Story*. Shannon's future plans hope to be a career in performing in Musical Theatre and film. She also hopes someday to be a solo recording artist, wonderful mother, and wife. She is thrilled to be working with *The Reach of Song* in God's beautiful mountains.



FURMAN LUNSFORD

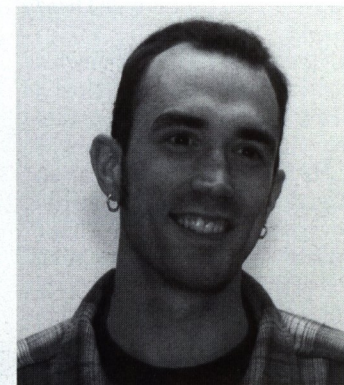
I started playing the guitar when I was around thirteen years old. Later on I won a talent show and was on TV. I then started singing and playing in church. I have performed at the festival of traditional music at Berea Kentucky, and I perform at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. A lady who plays banjo and I play and sing in churches, concerts, etc. I performed in *The Reach of Song* in 1996 and enjoyed it very much.



NELL TODD HOLLIDAY

Nell was one of six children raised in a log home by Zura and Alvin Todd, who had a Dahlia Farm at Lost Hollow in the Suches area of Union County for many years. One variety developed by the Todds was a raspberry pink dahlia named "Byron Herbert Reece" after the late author whose story is told in *The Reach of Song*. Nell has three sons and seven grandchildren. From a one room school, she went on to earn a Master's in Education. She has taught middle school in North Georgia for 22 years and is now retired.

Nell Todd Holliday



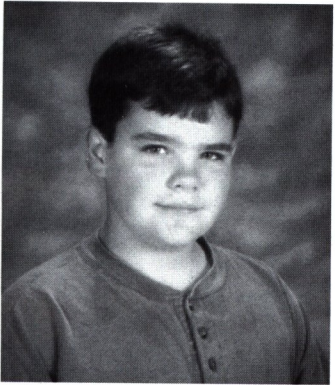
GREGORY DOVE LUSH

Gregory is proud to be returning to *The Reach of Song* this year. He is currently preparing to direct *King Lear* for the graduate program at the University of Mississippi. He holds a degree in theatre performance from the University of Texas at Arlington, where he graduated summa cum laude. He has worked on both professional and university stages directing shows such as *Eleemosynary*, *No Exit*, and *The Love Talker*, and acting in shows such as *Tartuffe*, *The Tempest*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Destiny*, *Comedy of Me*, and the North American premier of *Time of My Life* at Stage West. He also enjoys composing music for theatre and playing guitar. He dedicates this show to the memory of his grandfather, Joyce Lush.



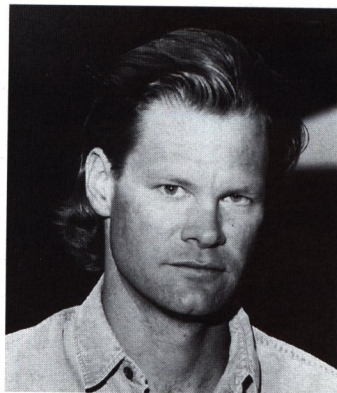
JOYCE McMANIOUS

Home for Joyce McManious is a log house in the Dial Valley where she is a homemaker and indulges her passion for hiking the mountain trails of North Georgia. The mother of two and grandmother of three, this is her sixth season as a part of the cast of *The Reach of Song*. She is pleased to be playing the part of Emma Reece for the fifth year.



CASEY SHADIX

Casey is an academically gifted 8th grader at Hayesville Middle School. He enjoys playing the clarinet in the HMS band, and is active in the following clubs and organizations: Jr. Beta Club, Jr. Optimist Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He enjoys some sports at school, cross country and track and field. Casey also enjoys the theatrical arts. He has been an active volunteer with the Licklog Players at the Peacock Playhouse in Hayesville for 5 years. He has performed in the following productions: *Robin Hood*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *Wind In the Willows*, *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *The Homecoming* and *Jungle Book*. He is also very active in the Murphy School of Dance. For 4 years he has studied tap, jazz, ballet IV, and ballet technique under the direction of his instructor Janis Owl.



PETER MORSE

Peter Morse (Reece), fresh from the Salt Lake Acting Company production of *Sylvia*, Peter is thrilled to spend this summer exploring the life and times of Hub Reece. This production of *The Reach of Song* marks Peter's twelve year reunion with director Charlie Otte who directed Morse in *Tecumseh!* for two summers. A Dartmouth College graduate Morse holds an MFA from the University of California, San Diego. New York theatre experience includes productions of *Julius Caesar* with Al Pacino and Martin Sheen at the NY Shakespeare Festival, *That's It Folks!* with David Hyde Pierce at Playwrights Horizons and *Heather Valley* and *A Woman Without A Name* at the Signature Theatre Company. Regionally Peter has appeared at the Cleveland Playhouse (*Les Liasons Dangereuses*), the Philadelphia Theatre Company (as Joe Jackson in *Out!*) and the Clarence Brown Theatre at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. During the past year Peter landed roles in episodes of *Touched By An Angel*, *Walker*, *Texas Ranger*, *Promised Land* and in three made-for-TV movies: *A Loss of Innocence*, *Detention-Siege at Johnson High*, and *The Ticket*. This spring Peter was a guest actor at Sundance Institute's Film Lab. Outside interests include poetry(!), reading, drawing, cooking, carpentry and numerous sports and outdoor activities, particularly fly fishing (any leads would be appreciated and can be left at the box office). Peter is a former 18 and under Colorado State doubles tennis champion.



ELSIE HUGHES NELSON

Elsie grew up in Young Harris, where she began singing as a child. She was active in music and drama during her years at Towns County High. Now residing in Gainesville, GA, Elsie has been a member of the Gainesville Chorale for nineteen years. She toured Europe with the 1989 Concert tour. She also sings with her church choir, where she is often a soloist. Elsie is proud of her mountain heritage and appreciates the opportunity to share her story through the show for the fifth season.



ROBERTA VOYLES

I started playing banjo at 6 years old. My father taught me. By the time I was 9 years old my brother Carl and I were performing at school programs. I have performed at Berea Kentucky and at the 22nd annual celebration of traditional music at Cades Cove Old Timer's Day. I have a group, Roberta & The Marble Mountaineers, that sings and plays with me. We also perform at John C. Campbell Folk School, nursing homes and local churches.



*J.D. ROBINSON

A Brasstown, NC musician, J.D. Robinson's musical interests are varied and began early in life. He has played guitar since the third grade, and at age seventeen took up banjo-picking and has played professionally since age 18. He toured the U.S. and Canada for two years, working one-night shows. In addition to banjo, he plays the drums, bass, pedal steel, fiddle and mandolin. J.D. was the Georgia Banjo Champion in 1975 and in the top five at the National Banjo Championship in 1993. He is also a teacher at John C. Campbell Folk School and gives private lessons in Hiawassee and Brasstown.

MOUNTAIN MUSIC

"Now the thing about an ole-timey mountain music that makes it different from most types of music is that the only way you can learn one of these songs is by listening to somebody else play it. Usually what would happen was a fella who wants to learn a tune goes over to some other fella's house and they get together and play . . ."
(James Farist, act one, scene one, 1991 Production *THE REACH OF SONG*)



Music, whether it was the religious music he sang in church, or the Saturday night hoe-down style, came naturally to the musically-talented mountaineer. He often crafted his own instruments, then taught himself to play by ear because he couldn't read music (or wouldn't have had the sheet music if he could have read it).

Singing schools were set up in itinerant singing masters who used a method called "shape notes" to help their semi-literate pupils to learn to sight-read music.

The original shape note music, dating back to Elizabethan England and revived in America in the early 1800s, used four basic shapes (a diamond, triangle, square and circle) to replace the round part of a written note. Once the shape was assigned a pitch relative to the scale, singers were able to quickly grasp sight-reading of music. In 1832, shape notes were expanded to include seven shapes to take in the more familiar seven note scale (do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do).

Today, except for some gospel music, shape music is almost forgotten.

The following piece of original music from "THE REACH OF SONG" was written by the drama's musical director, Phillip DePoy.

REECE THEME



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS, PLACES AND PEOPLE

Amen bench—in church, the bench where the deacons and church elders often sat and voiced their agreement with the preacher through frequent, fervent "ah-mens!"

Bald Mountain—at 4,784 feet, the highest mountain in Georgia. Its Cherokee name was "Enotah" (ee-no-tah), meaning "place of the fresh green."

Batthey Hospital—the state tuberculosis sanatorium in Rome, Georgia where Byron Herbert Reece was sent to recuperate.

Blairsville—the county seat of Union County and the nearest town to the Reece farm (a distance of about ten miles).

Blood Mountain—the massive, towering mountain on the southernmost end of Union county is only a few hundred feet shy of Brasstown Bald's 4,784 feet (highest in the state). Byron Herbert Reece's birthplace and later farm is very near the base of Blood Mountain's north slopes. The name "Blood" was given to it sometime in the distant past, along with the name of its adjacent peak, "Slaughter" because of a bloody battle fought on the two mountains between Indian tribes before the white man came here.

Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation—the local nonprofit electric utility cooperative headquartered in Young Harris, chartered in 1938 with the goal of providing reliable electric service to members at reasonable rates: it serves several counties in North Georgia and North Carolina and gets much of its power from the TVA.

Chatuge—a TVA-created lake which lies in Towns County, GA and Clay County, NC.

Cobweb supper—a social event in which a young woman prepared a dinner for two and put it into a box tied at the end of a long string. The string was wound through the woods. A young man would choose a string, follow it, and share the meal in the company of the young lady to whose dinner the string was attached.

Dr. Nicholson—Dr. J.M. Nicholson, principal of Union County High School, recognized the talent of Byron Herbert Reece and attempted to encourage Reece's literary development.

Decoration Day—an annual day in which church members gathered together to neaten and decorate the graves of loved ones; usually the event included a "dinner on the ground" to feed the workers.

"Good hand"—a phrase meaning someone is skilled at something, as in "he's a good hand at writing."

Emma Reece—Byron Herbert Reece's mother.

Hiawassee—the county seat of Towns County; legend says its Indian translation may be "pretty fawn."

Lockheed—a Marietta, Georgia firm which assembles aircraft, much of it for the military.

North Georgia News—the Union County legal organ and weekly newspaper located in Blairsville.

Nottely River—the name for a large tributary flowing out of Choestoe valley into the TVA-created lake of the same name near Blairsville, Georgia.

Ralph McGill—the crusading editor of the Atlanta Constitution for many years; McGill, who had much influence in the south and who appreciated literary works, noticed the work of Byron Herbert Reece when Reece was still a student at Young Harris College.

Sassafras—the root of the sassafras shrub which has a pungent, spicy flavor and which makes a flavorful tea when steeped in hot water and sweetened.

Signs—as in "planting by the signs." The mountain people followed closely the signs of the Zodiac as outlined in the Farmer's Almanac in planting crops and many other activities.

St. Elmo's Fire—a discharge of electricity that can occur in a storm, creating a flaming phenomenon.

Suches—a small mountain community located in the rugged mountainous section of Union County's southern end, a few mountains over from where Reece lived.

TVA—Tennessee Valley Authority—created by Congress in the late 1930s with the directive to improve the Tennessee Valley (areas in Eastern Tennessee, North Georgia and Western North Carolina). Improvements included educating farmers about erosion and building dams to create huge reservoirs used to assist navigation in the larger rivers, to control flooding and to generate cheap hydro-electric power. It was the TVA and the Rural Electrification Administration which brought cheap, uniform electrical service to the mountain area.

Towns County—a small county lying east of Union County in northeast Georgia. Its county seat is Hiawassee. Towns was named after Governor George W. Towns, and the county was formed from portions of Rabun County on its east and Union County to the west. Young Harris and Young Harris College lie in the western end of Towns County.

Trackrock Gap—a low-lying gap near the east border of Union County and the west border of Towns County which contains a number of soapstone rocks bearing numerous curious markings of ancient date. Some experts believe the artifacts pre-date Columbus and were possibly made by the Mound-Builder Indians or an even earlier tribe, all of whom pre-date the Cherokees in this region. Some experts put the markings' origins at 3,000 years before the birth of Christ.

Trahlyta—(trah-lie-tah)—the name for the lake at Vogel State Park. The lake was named after an Indian princess buried at an intersection known as Stone Pile Gap several miles from the Suches area.

Union County—a county in northeast Georgia in which Byron Herbert Reece was born and lived his life. When a name was being discussed for the new county, it is said that one man rose up and said, "Let it be names Union, for none but Union men reside in it," in reference to the support of the Union from many of the area's citizens. Blairsville is Union's county seat.

Vogel State Park—one of the most popular state parks in Georgia, Vogel lies at the base of Blood Mountain. Its man-made lake Trahlyta covers the old homeplace in which Byron Herbert Reece was born. Wolf Creek feeds the lake, then spills over the dam and winds downstream to the Reece farm where Byron Herbert spend the bulk of his life farming and writing.

Walasi-Yi—(wah-lah-see-yeh)—the Cherokee name for the gap near Blood Mountain which allowed a north and south passage. It meant "place of the frogs." Thus the gap was called "Frogtown Gap" by locals before the new highway (19-129) was engineered through the mountain pass by a man named Neel in the 1930s, and renamed for him. Local sentiment was against the renaming, and there are some today who still refer to it as "Frogtown Gap."

Young Harris—a small village lying in the western end of Towns County, the town was formerly called McTyre but was named after Judge Young Lofton Gerdine Harris, an early benefactor of Young Harris College.

Wolf Creek—the creek which feeds Lake Trahlyta at Vogel State Park and which flows at the back of the Reece farm homeplace today.

Young Harris College—a two-year Methodist college founded in 1886 by the Rev. Artemas Lester to serve the educational needs of mountain youth. The college is a dominant landmark in the small town of Young Harris. Byron Herbert Reece taught at Young Harris College and took his life there in 1958.

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The Importance of Church & Religion

The old-time mountain "fire and brimstone" preachers, with their pulpit-pounding and loud, forceful preaching under the hot, uninsulated roofs of the old meeting houses, could make the fires of hell come alive to the listening audience.

When revival time came, invariably in the hot summers when it was hot enough to make the pine sap drip from the beams in the pine church ceilings, everyone went to revival meetin'. There was no excuse for missing a meeting except very grave illness. Anyone who did not go to revival was considered a confirmed sinner or atheist.

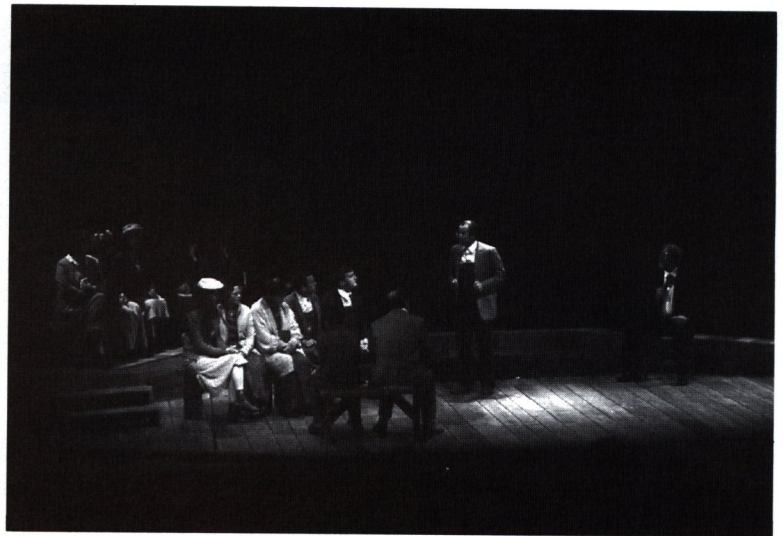
The mountaineer believed the same doctrines as his parents and grandparents had. God's will came first and all else came afterward. God was not a concept to leave in the church on Sunday; God went with the mountaineer through every day of the week (even if he did take a nip of "shine" once in a while). God was with him out in the fields, and God was there at the end of a hard day of plowing when he came home to rest on the front porch

and watch the night come. He might not always understand God's will in his life, but he accepted it regardless.

Church was also the center for some of the best times in the community. Homecoming, decoration day and dinner on the ground were times when all those who had moved away from the home community came back for the day or weekend. They arrived by the carload from the cities to bunk in with relatives who were happy to extend hospitality, exchange news and take a look at folks they'd not seen for a year or more. The

dead were not forgotten either. The graves were cleared of overgrowth, and old flowers were replaced with fresh ones.

That Sunday, the church picnic tables groaned under the weight of enough country-style banana puddings, deviled eggs, cornbread, fried chicken, green beans and good home cooking to feast the eyes, let alone fill the stomach. Even those who were not particularly enthusiastic churchgoers went to this day of services, lining up to pile their plates high with the good home cooking of the congregation's ladies.



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THE CULTURE OF THE REACH OF SONG

By Roxanne Dyer Powell

"What I remember was a people; independent as they were principled: some would stay up all night just a picking —sawing at that fiddle. Then, right across the hollar, another — best a friends maybe — thought the fiddle was just the pathway to hell . . . See, a man's got a right to what he believes!" (Byron Herbert Reece, act one, 1994 REACH OF SONG)

THE REACH OF SONG is filled with the rich cultural heritage of the Southern Appalachian mountains before, during and immediately after World War II. Much of this culture is disappearing today as technology and lifestyles of the outside world creep into this once isolated part of America, and as young people leave the area to find jobs in the cities.

Among the cultural concepts included in THE REACH OF SONG are the mountaineer's close ties with his church and fellow men, his strong belief in an all-powerful omniscient God whose will takes precedence over all, even when that will is not understood.

The mountaineer also enjoyed a good time, though the more pious often frowned on such frivolous pursuits as dancing, non-gospel singing and music-making, and playing cards. Still, for many, the mountaineer's innate love of music and his sense of rhythm could not be denied. Barn dances and house raising parties were often an occasion for merry-making, dancing and courtin'. Fiddles, banjos, mandolins and guitars were favorites, as was the dulcimer, a traditional folk instrument. The mountaineer knew and rendered well in voice and instrument the old folk ballads handed down from his ancestors, as well as the sacred music of his church.

The mountaineer was naturally reticent, particularly in the presence of a stranger. He was clannish, keeping to himself and upholding his own family to the end. He was independent-minded, which some interpreted as stubbornness; for when a mountaineer decided what he thought about a thing, there was almost no hope of changing his view.

Not surprisingly, then, mountain politics was a lively affair, sometimes

resulting in hard feelings, knife fights and vote-buying.

Medical doctors were little known in the mountains, and most mid-wifery and cures were dispensed by "granny women" who knew the herbs and techniques which were most likely to help in cases of illness. When the cures failed, it was often perceived as "God's will."

It is not surprising that in a land of mists, shadowy hollows (hollers) and hidden coves that the mountaineer, who often traveled by mule or on foot, would develop superstitions and a belief in "haints" or souls of the dead. There are many tales in the mountains of haunted houses, wandering ghosts, and of hearing horse's hooves pounding by, with no horses in sight.

In early years, when "catamounts" or mountain lions roamed the woods and wolves and bears were still plentiful, there were real dangers in the forest,



giving rise to many a colorful tale of a narrow escape. But the mountaineer's satisfying way of life that he had honed through many generations was to greatly change before the mid-twentieth century. With the coming of the TVA, electric power dams which displaced the mountaineer from his best farmland and the only way of making a living he had, and with World War II bringing the crashing reality that he was no longer cut off from the rest of the world, the cultural heritage of Appalachia was in for great upheavals. Today, this heritage survives mainly through preservation projects, like THE REACH OF SONG, which endeavors to hold on to these fading lifestyles, interpreting them for today's audience in authentic detail.

World War II's Long Arm

"I just heard on the radio at home! The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor!" (Sally Mae, act one, scene three, "THE REACH OF SONG")



It was a shrinking world, as the mountaineer found out by listening to his new, electric Philco radio. He was just beginning to appreciate the advantages of electricity when news of the spreading war in Europe began to trouble his soul.

Before electricity came into his life, he'd never worried about much beyond the other side of the mountain. As he walked behind his mule, chanting and singing songs that were centuries old, all he knew was peace, though he was willing enough to fight if he had to.

Suddenly, with radios in nearly every household, he was able to keep up with world events. From a farm at the base of Blood Mountain in Union county or a cabin at the base of Bell Mountain in Towns county, the news that came over the air waves was disturbing indeed.

Many, never exposed to world events before, wanted to believe that, bad as the German armies seemed, they wouldn't amount to much. Someone would turn them back before they struck for America. Besides the war was someone else's fight. Every man had a right and a duty to tend to his own business.

But Hitler didn't go away. And when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the mountaineer knew where his duty lay. He didn't shirk it, either. He'd fought before to make this country free, and he'd do it

again. Mountain men signed up in droves without waiting to be drafted.

They made some of the best soldiers in the army, too, and were often put in the toughest combat situations. Boys who'd studied in one room mountain schools about foreign lands with strange-sounding names suddenly found themselves standing on those distant shores in Europe and the South Pacific.

Back home, their folks prayed constantly and scanned the skies uneasily whenever they went outside. For once in their lives, the mountains did not feel completely safe to the mountaineers.

They feared numerous plots from the Japanese and Germans and fears and suspicions ran high. Every night, each radio in the community never lacked for ears to listen to the updates or the dreaded news of a serious defeat in an area where their boys were fighting.

Many a mountain home still bears photos, browned from aging, carefully and lovingly framed, of the boys who never came back. Their families know the names of the foreign spots where their boys fell victim to the enemy, whether on a south Pacific island or in occupied Europe. The world might forget these boys who bought the country back with the ultimate price, but their families never will.



Appalachia Today

"Most important thing to remember is where you came from. If you don't know where you came from, it's gonna be twice as hard getting to where you're going. Traditions and things from back when, well, they should help us all into tomorrow, that's all. Something to help find your way. " (Larry, act two, scene three, THE REACH OF SONG)

Today's Appalachia retains much of its natural beauty, though its population is growing and homes are dotting more of the hills and valleys.

Its young people have been forced to leave for the cities to find work, and many will spend their entire working lives elsewhere, returning only in retirement.

Many of the picturesque old barns have fallen in, and much of the hand-craft culture has died out, preserved by only a few dedicated craftsmen. Yet, there can still be heard the twang of the colorful language of the native people, folks still love a fiddlin' hoedown on a Saturday night, and many hills and hollows still boast country churches where folks gather to worship on Sunday.

As awareness spreads about the special culture of this region, some of that culture is being revived and preserved through efforts like "THE REACH OF SONG"---so that those who never knew the culture can learn of it; and those who grew up with the culture can enjoy it again.

The mountain people have, for many years, had to venture from home for a glimpse of the outside world. Today, the outside world comes to them---for a look at life the way it used to be, and maybe, sometimes, the way it ought to be again.

THE WHITTLES' BENCH

"Them men sitting over there all day, loafing. Just whittling away at time at that whittler's bench . . . Talking about folks when they ain't around . . ."
(Bernice, act one, scene one, 1993 Production *THE REACH OF SONG*)



The whittler's bench (or loafer's bench) was an informal institution of every small rural mountain town many years ago. It was the domain of overall-clad older men who often coordinated whittlin' with chewin'. It was the spot where younger, working men stopped by on errands in town to pick up on the latest news (men seldom called their talk gossip), and it was the perfect location for young boys hoping to be men to learn about life.

Zell Miller, a veteran Georgia statesman who grew up in the small town of Young Harris, recalls his hometown whittler's bench in his book, *"THE MOUNTAINS WITHIN ME"* (Cherokee Publishing, c. 1985).

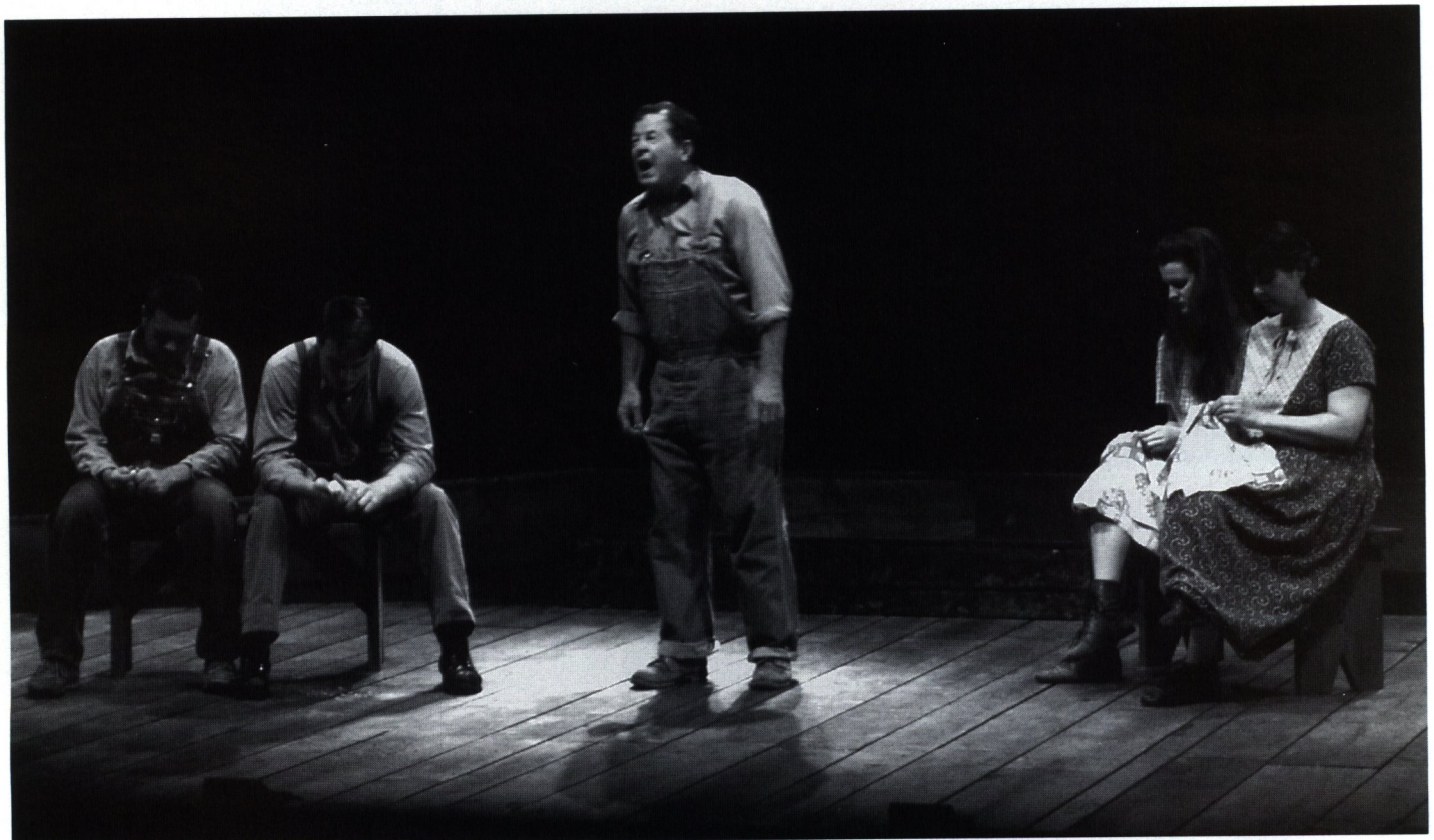
"As a barefoot boy growing up in the mountains of Young Harris before the time of television and without a male companion at home, I spent many, many hours hanging around what is known as the 'loafer's bench' at the country store where every night a dozen or more men would gather after the day's work

in the fields or woods to gossip, talk politics, tell tall tales and generally 'chaw the fat,' " Miller wrote.

"In the summer it was outside on a bench and on nail kegs; in the winter, inside around a pot-bellied stove...It was at least 10 feet long and from one end to the other the edges were carved by the whittlers' knives into impressive designs," Miller recalled. "It was an adventure in itself just going down to see what the day's idle sculpturing had wrought.

"The faces of the 'loafers' changed according to the time of the day, week, month and year...but the conversations, even when the stories were outrageous lies, were always fascinating," Miller writes, adding, "I didn't mind a bit being the only boy there or being called 'the young-un' and teased about not having 'enuf whiskers to be licked off by a kitty-cat.' "

Miller notes that "some of the regulars would come early on the days when they had good stories to tell, and they would tell them over and over, embellishing them with each telling, as each shift of listeners came in. Often the final versions were so much better than the first ones that the originators would go away convinced in their own minds that that was the way the events really occurred."



THE QUILTING BEE

"Them women spending all day over there at the quilting bee. Making nothing but mean gossip, maybe a quilt or two on the side." (Zack, act one, scene one, 1992 Production THE REACH OF SONG)

Quilts were not only a piece of art for the hardy women folk of Scotch/Irish heritage who settled in the hills of Appalachia; quilts were a practical necessity for keeping the family warm against the harsh winter cold in rough housing where snow often blew in through the cracks and the floor was earthen.

The only luxury these women allowed themselves was making the quilt pretty through patterns handed down for generations and shared among themselves.

Quilts were a way of recycling pieces of clothing that had served long and well, but were beyond mending further. Wedding dresses, shirt pieces, and any scrap of leftover fabric found their final showcase in quilts.

Once a quilt "top" was pieced, binding the top with a sandwiched layer of batting and a lining on the back side by quilting, or sewing them together, was a big job for one person, so often a "quilting bee" was formed.

Quilting bees were festive occasions for women who often struggled with heavy household duties without a visit from another of their gender for many months.

Appalachian women, like an invisible sisterhood, bonded



together to help each other through any struggles they might face: pregnancy, childbirth, sickness, or caring for a new husband. The informal camaraderie of a quilting

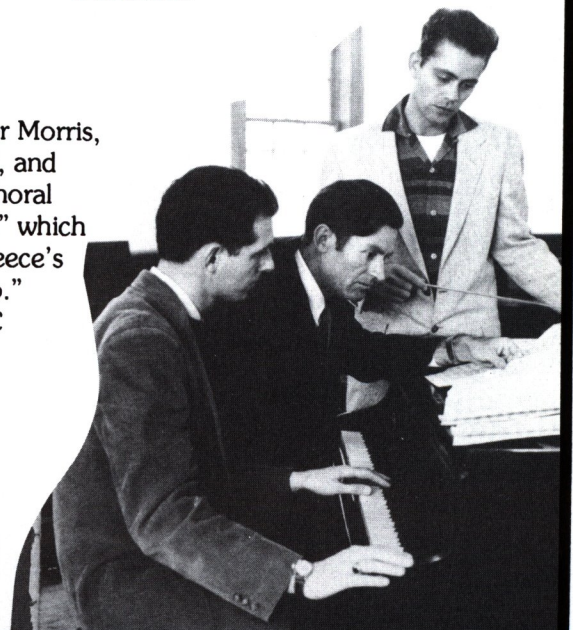
bee was a good place for young girls to learn what they would face as women, and it was good social therapy for the older ones.

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Photo:
YHC faculty members Victor Morris, BYRON HERBERT REECE, and William Fox prepare for a choral performance of "Adoration," which is based on poems in Mr. Reece's book "Bow Down in Jericho." (1955-56 - courtesy of YHC Alumni Association)



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Folk Healing & Superstitions

When anyone, young or old, was ailing, and home-devised cures didn't seem to be working, very often a "granny woman" was called in. Using potions and plasters concocted of herbs and roots gathered in the mountains (usually mixed with generous portions of whiskey), she often combined her medicines with the scriptures for a sure cure.

For "everyday" aches and pains, and to forestall illness, the mountaineer made sure he got his regular doses of herb teas, like ginseng, pennyroyal (penny-rile), sassafrass or spicewood tea in the spring or summer. A man couldn't go wrong taking God's medicines that grew free and wild in the woods, and mountaineers believed that doses should be taken liberally or not at all.

Closely tied to folk healing were the mountaineer's superstitions. Mountain people followed closely the Zodiac signs and moon phases for planting and harvesting. Corn could not be planted during a new moon, because it would turn out to be all stalk and no corn. Board shingles were never made on the new moon, either, since they would curl and crack and would not keep out the rain. Hog-butcherer also depended on the

moon phases. "Oh, a doctor would've been a poor man in my town! Daddy believed castor oil cured whatever ailed you, and the more sick you were, the more he'd force down ya" . . . We had sassafrass tea in the summer to thin yer blood, and pine needle tea in the winter to thicken it." (Ezra Davenport (Maybelle) act one, scene once, 1992 Production *THE REACH OF SONG*)

Very often, folk cures were rituals carried out on the right phase of the moon. At one mountain home, an asthmatic child had two possible cures effected on her; in the first, a lock of her hair was driven by a peg into a hole in the doorpost. Then, she was passed through a split sapling at a spring behind the house. Warts could be "harmed" off, usually to someone or something else.

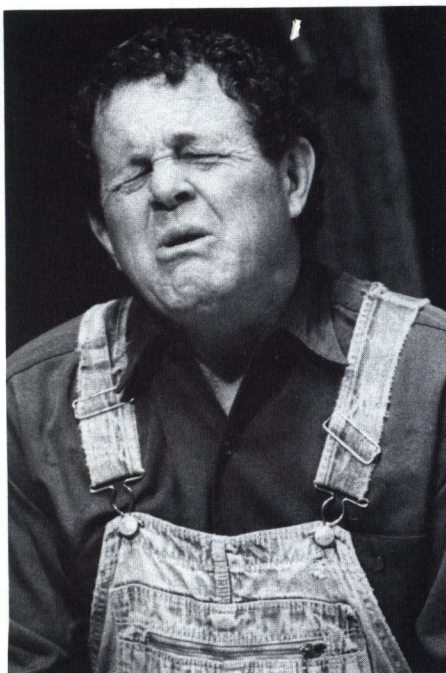
Mountain people also believed a number of sayings, handed down from the generations before. For instance, if a screech owl called from a chimney, it meant disaster to the family inside. If a rooster crowed after dark, there would be a death in the neighborhood. If a woman dropped her dishcloth, or her nose itched, it meant company was coming, so she made a bit of something extra for dinner. Ashes were never taken out of a chimney on a Friday, because something would be stolen from the house before the next Friday.

Folks also believed very much in the spirit world, though they wanted nothing

to do with it. They knew of the existence of witches who could curse a household by drying up the milk cow, or driving a nail into a post each day to produce a voo-doo like effect on someone. They also believed in "haints," or the wandering spirits of those returned from the dead.

It's not surprising that such an imaginative people who spent a great deal of time in the natural world would encounter "ghosts." Walking barefoot along a mountain road at night to a church gathering with only a "coke bottle light" (a dangerous lighting device improvised by stuffing a rag wick into an empty cola bottle partly filled with flammable liquid) or dim kerosene lantern to see by, it was easy for the imagination to be stimulated by the slithering of something unseen across the foot, or for the eye to be fooled by moonlight glittering on beads of dew shimmering on a spider web.

It is interesting to note that with the advent of television and changes in lifestyle that few mountaineers nowadays report ghostly encounters.



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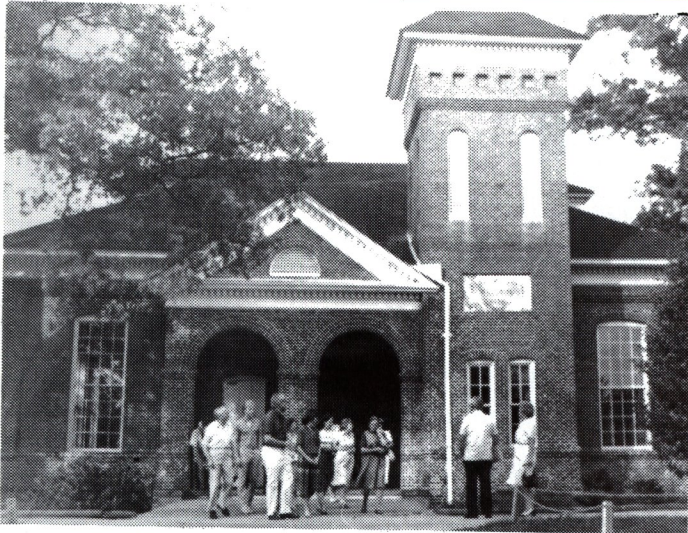
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READIN', WRITIN', 'RITHMETIC & HARD BENCHES

"If all that were true--that we in the mountains are first cousins to Al Capp's dogpatchers--then how could the little one-room school where I was raised in Choestoe have produced two state supreme court justices, one chief justice, and a state school superintendent? In fact, I think it is generally conceded that no comparable region of the United States has produced as many noted men as the mountain counties of North Georgia..."
(Byron Herbert Reece, act two, scene one, *THE REACH OF SONG*)



The Susan B. Harris Chapel is the oldest building on the campus of Young Harris College.

Education for most mountaineers was a rather crude affair; yet many mountain children were naturally gifted despite the lack of cultural exposure--perhaps because of growing up in households like Reece's, where singing long, memorized folk ballads was combined with early reading of difficult material like the Bible.

While not all families valued "book-learnin' " (under the supposed notion that it wasn't right to "get above your raisin' ") many mountain families, particularly in certain sections like Choestoe, saw an education as the step up necessary for their children to be successful in the world.

According to volume one of "Sketches of Union County History" (p. 35), "There are more college graduates from the Choestoe District according to population than any other place in Georgia."

Most children walked several miles to school each day, often barefoot. They "toted" their cold dinners, packed from breakfast, in an old lard tin. The mountaineer never had "lunch"--the midday meal (dinner) was traditionally the largest of the day.

The school was a single-room, naturally air-conditioned shack in which children had to gather around a pot-bellied stove in winter to keep fingers, noses and toes from being frost-bitten.

"Desks" were most often crude benches, though some schools managed a few "boughten" desks so students didn't have to study from their laps and had seat backs to lean against.

All grades studied and recited together in the one

room, with younger children learning from recitations of the older pupils. The teacher had to maintain discipline among all age groups, and often did so with a hickory switch applied liberally to the backsides of mischief-makers.

Girls played with girls and boys played with boys. Girls often liked to talk quietly and be "lady-like" while the boys played the rougher games of wrestling, "mad-dog" tag, rowdy ball games and even rock-throwing.

Mountain children had an almost endless repertoire of games, and were inventive enough to make up their own.

With much of their time claimed in chores like milking, feeding stock, hoeing corn, carrying water and the like, mountain youngsters learned early to make the most of their free moments.

They carved their own toys and used bits and pieces of odds and ends to construct toy automobiles after they had seen their first one.

When it came time for a college education, Young Harris College, founded in 1886 by Rev. Artemas Lester for the purpose of educating enterprising mountain youth, was one place to go. With its program of work on the college farm in exchange for tuition, many young people who could not otherwise have gotten a college education were able to do so.



This old one room school, Pine Grove, was built in the early 1900s in the Scataway community of Towns County. It is now preserved on the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds.

By The Sweat Of His Brow ... Livelihood

With limited educational opportunities, lack of industrialization in the mountains and no electricity, the mountaineer had almost no way of making a living except farming.

Except for a few teaching jobs which didn't pay much, being a store-keeper or merchant, or holding public office, there were almost no jobs in the mountains and very little chance of making cash.

Still, the mountain lifestyle didn't demand much cash. The mountain family either "made-do" or did without. Mountain women were adept at carding wool, spinning it and weaving it into blankets to keep the family warm. They pieced quilts, knitted socks, did laundry the hard way in an old iron washpot where clothes were boiled and then beaten or rubbed over a rub board.

Mountain men made whatever furniture was needed. Some became experts at caning chairs with hickory splints. If a man wanted a fiddle or other musical instrument, all he had to do was give somebody's a good inspection: then he went home and made one for himself, finishing it off with a homemade bow strung up with hair cut from his horse's tail.

If the mountain man needed a little cash in the fall to pay his taxes or a debt or two, he simply wandered into the woods for a while (which he enjoyed anyway) and dug a little ginseng to pay his bill.

It was an independent lifestyle, nearly free of entanglements. A man was a free spirit, who didn't need either the "government" nor an employer to tell him what to do.

That was one reason the mountain man preferred farming to working for someone else. Using a mule and a one-horse plow, he broke the sod in flatlands, and even on steep mountainsides if that was all he had and raised many crops, most notably corn.

Corn was an important staple in the diet. It could be fed to either man or beast and prepared a number of ways, in bread, mush or grits. It could even be made into more profitable moonshine, and some did just that, since it was said corn brought more by the gallon than it did by the bushel. Most mountaineers did not particularly like the production of 'shine. For some, it was simply the only way to put cash money in their pockets to raise their families on.

By about the 1940s, many farms replaced the old stand-by mule with a gas or diesel-powered tractor. It could do as much work in a day as several mules and men. More acreage of crops would mean a more decent standard of living for the mountain man who earned his living in the sweat of his brow.

When the mountain man sat down at night in the glow of the kerosene lamp to his simple supper of cornbread, beans and milk, he knew that it was his work which put the very food on the table which his family ate. When he sat on his front porch and watched the evening mists wash over the land, he felt secure and content, just knowing that as long as he had good farmland, the will of the good Lord was with him, and the sun rose tomorrow, he's have food on the table.



The Coming Of TVA

"You can say what you want and make fun about them houses being under water and all, but those lakes are bringing jobs and prosperity to these mountains. That there dam at the end of those lakes means that TVA can get electricity to more folks in these parts and that'll be the greatest thing that happened since Columbus discovered America. (Emma, act two, scene two, The Reach of Song.

In 1937, under the directive of Congress to improve navigation and control flooding in the Tennessee Valley, the TVA began building a number of dams in the area to hold back the pure mountain creek water that had flowed out of the earth for millions of years.

Mountain farmers living in the creek bottomlands were distressed to learn that TVA intended to flood the lowest-lying areas, which meant the loss of some of the area's best and most fertile farmlands.

Some folks refused to leave their family farms until the last minute when the lake waters began to cover their old homeplaces where generations of their families had been born and raised. Even their family graveyards had been uprooted and moved.

But other mountaineers, while sympathizing with their neighbors' losses, were happy to know that soon TVA would bring cheap plentiful electric power into their homes. Before TVA, only a few homes in small areas near river plants had electricity part-time which was often turned off after a



certain hour. But TVA brought power into the reach of every man, rich or poor, near town or in the deepest mountain hollow.

The Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation was formed in 1938 from a local Rural Electrification Administration cooperative, made up of about 150 area citizens. This group helped with education, wiring of homes and even helped with group purchases of electric appliances.

Now, instead of having to go out to the spring house at the branch for milk and butter, all the family had to do was reach in the refrigerator. Instead of boiling clothes in the washpot, the lucky mountain woman could let the wringer-washer do the work. No need to light the old kerosene lamp at night or go to bed early. Electric lights stood ready at the flip of a switch.

Of course, the new electricity also meant there was a monthly bill to pay where there had been none before, and there were the new appliances to pay for. The mountaineer would have to find some other way of making a living than merely subsisting off the land. Still, the construction of the lakes brought a financial windfall for some while the work lasted. Jobs clearing the lake bottoms, building new roads, bridges and constructing dams brought real cash income to many families as the Depression ebbed away.

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The stipple and pen and ink art work on the back cover is from the talented hands of artist John Wisley, from Clay County, North Carolina

"Lullaby" unpublished work by Byron Herbert Reece.

Article about Reece and additional historical articles about mountain culture are the collaborative effort of husband and wife team Jim and Roxanne Powell. Jim is a syndicated editorial cartoonist. Roxanne is a free-lance writer and has recently completed a children's book.

Souvenir Program

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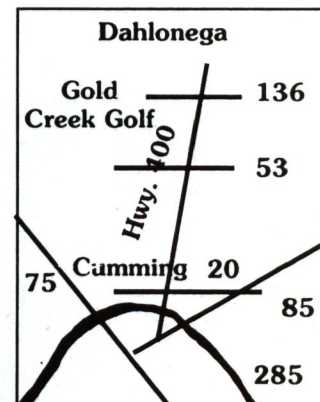
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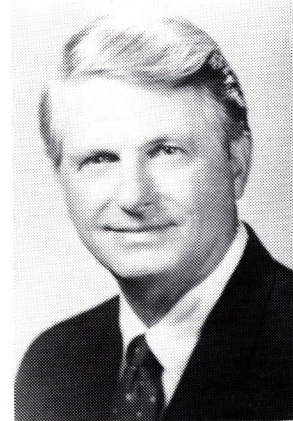


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WELCOME TO THE REACH OF SONG....

The product of pioneer Georgia mountain families, I take special pride in this production. Told through the eyes of Georgia writer Byron Herbert Reece, who was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, it depicts the customs, folklore, music, food, dialect, politics and geography of the admirable and hardy Americans who settled and developed the Georgia Mountains.

Designated as Georgia's official historic drama, THE REACH OF SONG captures the unique culture and lifestyle of these courageous and beautiful mountain people in a way that brings them alive and places them in your heart and memory forever. It is a tribute to the unique heritage of this region of our state, and it is my hope that through efforts such as this, the special culture of the region will be preserved for all to experience and appreciate.

I hope you enjoy THE REACH OF SONG and will tell your friends about it, so that they, too, will have the opportunity to enjoy this delightful drama.

With kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Zell Miller in dark ink. The signature is stylized, with a large, looping 'Z' and 'M'. Below the signature, the name "Zell Miller" is printed in a simple, sans-serif font.

Zell Miller



LULLABY

by Byron Herbert Reece

"When he was cradle-length he heard
A tender voice croon
Above his head a sleepy word,
And he was sleeping soon
Sleep, go to sleep.

The stars tip up the sky;
There comes the moon;
The sun will soon
Open his great, red eye,
Sleep, go to sleep.

He slept and woke the years around
And knew both joy and grief
And time that never makes a sound
Was like the willow leaf
That springs again
And falls again
While seasons slip away.

At length a voice touched with pain
Began to sing and say;
Cherish, child, the lovely light
Cherish, child, the breath:
It isn't long till fall of night,
It isn't long till death.
Then sleep, go to sleep."

